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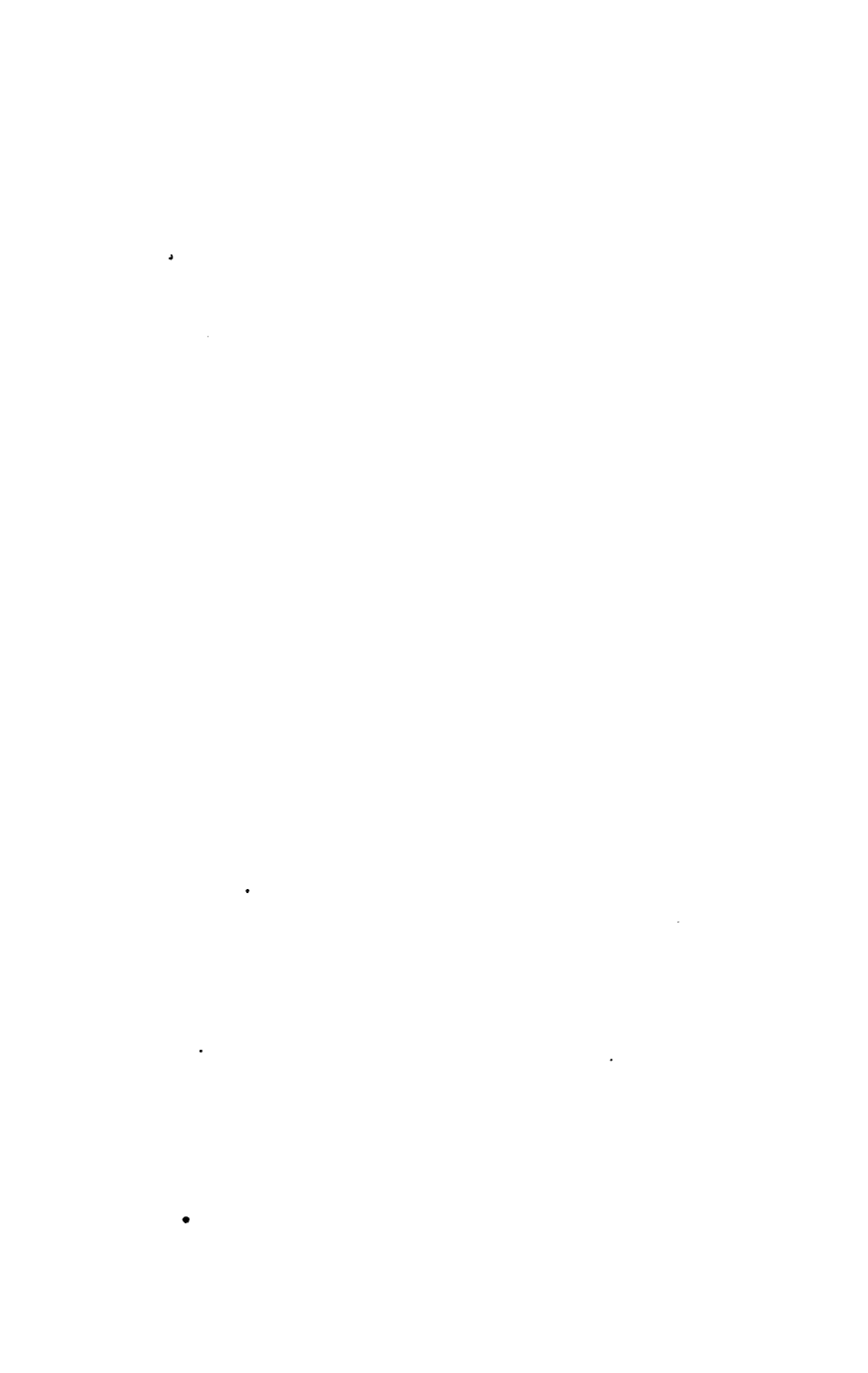
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PLAIN COMMENTARY  
ON  
The Four Holy Gospels,

INTENDED CHIEFLY  
FOR DEVOTIONAL READING.

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VOL. I.—PART I.  
ST. MATTHEW.  
CHAPTERS I.—XIII.

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ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY, AND WALK  
THEREIN; AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

*JEREMIAH VI. 16.*

GRANT, O LORD, THAT IN READING THY WORD, I MAY NEVER  
PREFER MY OWN SENTIMENTS BEFORE THOSE OF THE CHURCH  
IN THE PURELY ANCIENT TIMES OF CHRISTIANITY.

*Bishop Wilson.*

LONDON,  
JOHN HENRY PARKER.

M DCCC LV.

*101. d. 253.*





TO  
THE MEMORY  
OF THE REVEREND  
HUGH JAMES ROSE, B.D.,  
DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE LATE ARCHBISHOP  
OF CANTERBURY:  
A SINGULAR PATTERN OF EARNESTNESS AND EXCELLENCE  
IN EVERY DEPARTMENT OF A CLERGYMAN'S CALLING:  
**This Commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel**  
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,  
IN TOKEN OF HEARTY SYMPATHY WITH ALL HIS WRITINGS,  
AND IN GRATITUDE FOR THE BLESSING OF  
HIS BRIGHT EXAMPLE.



## PREFACE.

THE question has been asked why the present is called a 'Plain Commentary;' and what is precisely meant by 'devotional reading.' If the writer had been further called upon to explain why the quotations prefixed to his work express veneration for antiquity, he would have been furnished with all the heads requisite for those few introductory remarks which it has been his desire, all along, to offer on the completion of his work.

Complaint is often made of the want of an English Commentary on Holy Scripture; and it is not to be denied that, in the department of Exegesis, our Theological Literature is exceedingly deficient. But it seems to be not always remembered by those who complain, that students of the Bible are not all in search of exactly the same thing.

1. Thus, there are not a few readers who seem to approach the Gospels, for instance, in a purely

critical spirit. From the style of their inquiries, it would scarcely be supposed that they were handling an inspired Work. They treat it exactly as if it were an ordinary narrative. To be warned against some popular mistake: to be furnished with a correct translation: to have the events which it records reduced to true historical order; and to understand the allusions to manners, and natural phenomena:—such seem to be the chief objects of their desire. Readers of this class find writers of their own mental complexion: writers, who can be eloquent enough about the Pharisees and Sadducees; indeed, who have much to say on the subject of Jewish antiquities generally; are very exact in speaking of the Herods; very communicative concerning the geography of Palestine, and the observations of modern travellers: but who have little to communicate besides. They seem to make it a point of honour to be very dry on points of living interest. Their chief concern seems to be, to be *safe*. On every deep doctrinal statement, they affect at once the brevity and the ambiguity of an ancient oracle. Such writers are singularly prone to evacuate every profounder revelation of the SPIRIT, by a shallow suggestion as to its probable meaning; or they pass it by without a syllable of comment. Meanwhile, they compound for their silence when they should have spoken out by many an useless remark on what is perfectly plain already; many a clumsy paraphrase of statements which require

no paraphrase at all. We hear it sometimes said by readers of truer instincts, or who have been better taught, that such Commentaries 'always tell them everything except the precise thing which they desire to know.'

2. There is again another kind of Commentary which may be said to address itself to *controversial* readers. It shuns whatever is of a practical character: it shuns also what may be called the uncontroverted passages. It devotes itself entirely to the discussion of old difficulties, or to the discovery of new ones. The learned writer will fill his page with a dissertation about a date; enter into historical *minutiae* on the slightest provocation; try the patience of an ordinary reader by the tedious discussion of a various reading; or by aiming at exactness in points of purely technical or scientific interest,—on which, after all, nothing of a vital character can be said to depend. It might really seem as if it were never once suspected by writers of this class that the conduct of Zacchæus in climbing the sycamore tree, is a far more interesting matter than the sycamore tree into which he climbed: that everything which our SAVIOUR said is ten times as important as the dialect in which He said it. But, to do them justice, these writers do not design their labours for the general reader; nor do they pretend to have produced a complete Commentary. Whatever their intention, their labours, (which are yet very important in their way,) are so peculiar in their

character, that they may well be considered to form a class apart.

3. Then, there are labourers of a higher order in the same field, whose criticism is mostly *philological*. Beyond all things, they are intent on noticing the grammatical peculiarities of the inspired pages. A rare word,—an unique phrase,—some anomaly of construction; *this* it is which chiefly delights many readers of the Gospel. It is in some such spirit that scholars are but too prone to approach the Book of Life. They have been known to dismiss a verse of Scripture when they have translated it exactly, and established the incorrectness of our English Version. Let it not be thought for an instant that we are speaking slightly of a class of men whose work we delight in. Their labours will be overlooked by none who value the Truth. It is to *them* that we owe our very acquaintance with those sacred Oracles for which we profess so much regard. But it may surely be declared, without fear of contradiction, that Commentaries of this class are addressed exclusively to the learned. And not only so, but their authors may surely be charged with dealing with the husk or shell only, which contains the fruit. They do not even profess to reach the kernel. They seem seldom, if ever, to touch *the life*.

For is it not the simple fact, that after historical criticism, and scientific skill, and geographical investigation, and antiquarian sagacity, and even

scholarlike acumen, have all done their part towards the elucidation of the sacred text,—in very many instances, the work of the *Commentator* has yet to begin? Is not the labour of Exegesis quite a distinct matter? When St. John delivered his Divine Gospel into the hands of his awe-struck disciples, what kind of remarks are we to suppose that the Apostle and Evangelist made upon his Work? Did he instruct them in the force of the Greek article<sup>a</sup>? or reconcile his hours<sup>b</sup> with those of the other Evangelists? Did he tell them what the Jews meant by saying to Pilate,—‘It is not lawful for us to put any man to death<sup>c</sup>?’ or explain in what sense they proposed to ‘eat the Passover<sup>d</sup>,’ more than six hours after the Passover had been eaten by our LORD? Not so! It is at least very hard to believe that the Evangelist’s remarks would have been of this character. True indeed it is that neither was it perhaps altogether *necessary*, in their case, that he should have discussed such questions with them. But then, did not his Gospel require a Commentary? If Jews required to have their understandings opened<sup>e</sup>, in order that they might understand the writings of the Old Testament, do not Christians require some enlightenment in order that they may understand the writings of the New? What kind of remarks, then, (to repeat the question,) are we to

<sup>a</sup> Alluding to such places as St. John xviii. 15.

<sup>b</sup> See St. John xix. 14.

<sup>c</sup> St. John xviii. 31.

<sup>d</sup> St. John xviii. 28.

<sup>e</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 45.



suppose that the inspired Evangelist St. John would have made upon his own Work? Would he not rather have explained to His disciples the prophetic import of our SAVIOUR'S Miracles? and the meaning of certain of His Discourses? and why he had himself made such emphatic mention of the Water and the Blood which flowed from the wounded side of his LORD? and something about our SAVIOUR'S appearances after He was risen from the dead? In short, we are prone to believe concerning St. John, that if he made any Commentary on his own Gospel at all, his remarks were made in the way of *Interpretation* of it.

4. And this brings us naturally to the notice of that truest style of Commentary which attempts to interpret the difficult places of Holy Scripture; or, at least, never fails to call attention to them. *He* alone, in strictness, deserves the name of a Commentator, who *interprets* the profounder statements of the SPIRIT: who is at least suggestive, where he cannot be altogether explanatory; or admits that there is something in the sacred text which calls aloud for explanation, even while he confesses himself unable to explain it. Such a writer will gratefully avail himself of all subsidiary helps; but he will endeavour to keep steadily in view that the labours of critics and philologists are but means to an end; not the end itself.—It is manifest then, that we are now making allusion to a style of Commentary entirely different from either of the former. We are, in short, describing

such a Commentary as few indeed are capable of producing: for it demands, in the first place, entire familiarity with the writings of either Covenant; and a large acquaintance with what our Fathers in the faith have delivered on the subject of Holy-Scripture;—requirements which, in themselves, imply considerable learning. Next, there should be a vigorous yet chastened imagination, corrected by a sound and impartial judgment. There is needed besides, above all things, a holy life; freedom from party prejudice; and a submissive spirit, capable of prolonged and calm investigation. When all these qualifications are united, very little will yet be achieved, unless there be present a certain amount of that *Theological instinct*, in which it must be confessed that the moderns are, for the most part, lamentably deficient. Without this instinct, this attribute of a *Theological mind*, learning does but encumber: imagination does but mislead: modesty, candour, even holiness itself, must all prove unavailing.

5. There is yet another class of readers who resort to Holy Scripture neither to criticize its historical statements, nor to acquaint themselves with its linguistic difficulties, nor yet to have its hard places explained to them. They read the Gospel chiefly for their souls' health. They regard it as their daily bread, and depend on it for their daily portion. They rather shrink from a dissertation upon a difficulty, as they would from a domestic quarrel. They do not care to be told about the

idiom of the Evangelist ; and are rather annoyed than otherwise, at finding that the English Version of his Gospel requires correction. They are quite content with it, as it is. But if it must be corrected, (say they,) let it be done only in case of great emergency ; and then, in the fewest possible words. In their simplicity, perhaps in their ignorance, they do but desire to lay their hand on the Book of Life, as the poor woman laid her hand on the hem of CHRIST's garment ; and they know that virtue *must* come forth to heal them. Nay, they only value the elucidation of a mystery, as it is made thus to minister to edification. Those readers who, till lately, were generally driven to the pages of Doddridge or Scott, may be considered to represent, in excess, the class of readers of whom we are more particularly speaking. They read in a devotional spirit, and look for practical remarks on the sacred text ; or at least they wish to be assisted in drawing inferences from it which may influence their own daily life and conversation.—This, then, is a fifth and a distinct kind of Commentary ; and we will not attempt to define any further.

Of the five classes which we have described, the three first are essentially modern in their spirit ; the growth of a late age and a remote country : while, under the two latter heads, conjointly, *all* ancient expositions of Scripture may be classed. A Commentary which should exhibit in perfection the conjoined characters of all five, might perhaps be

called *complete* ; but no such Commentary will ever be written ; nor, if it could be written, would it be generally read. It would, in the first place, be so exceedingly lengthy : and, in the next place, it would be so exceedingly miscellaneous. The scholar would complain that what he was in search of was lost amid remarks and reflexions for which he had no leisure : the devotional reader would complain that he was for ever interrupted by learned discussions for which he had no relish. Students of the approved modern school would call everything that was not either exceedingly dry, or exceedingly shallow, fanciful and ridiculous. It is conceivable that their own business-like method would be yet more rudely characterized in return ; and perhaps, with better show of reason. In short, it is impossible to contrive a Commentary which shall meet the requirements of *every* class of readers ; and he who undertakes the difficult task of writing a Commentary at all, must make up his mind beforehand as to whom he proposes to teach ; and what sort of information he intends chiefly to convey.

The present writer, then, did not design his work in the first instance for critical readers : still less did he feel that he was addressing scholars, on their own ground : least of all will his pages prove congenial to those who study the Gospel in a controversial spirit. Without by any means consciously avoiding real difficulties of *any* kind, or (as he hopes) overlooking the results of sacred criticism,

he desired rather to exhibit the results of learned inquiry, than to expose the process by which those results may be arrived at. He chiefly aimed at affording unlearned readers some real insight into the Gospel: and he called his work '*a Plain Commentary*,' not because it pretends to make everything in the Gospel plain; nor yet because the language is always such as a wholly uneducated person can understand: but because it contains no words of Greek or Latin, — no allusions which are beyond the reach of an educated person. .

Next,—to mark his intention yet more fully,—the writer ventured to add that his Book was 'intended chiefly for devotional reading.' He meant thereby, that although he wished that what he wrote might prove useful to learned and unlearned readers, alike; to old and young, wise and simple, the teacher and the taught;—his notes were yet chiefly intended for those who study the Gospel in a devotional frame of mind; who read it in order to live by it; and desire, while they read, to have their attention aroused, their heart informed, and their curiosity in some degree gratified.

It will be seen, from what has thus been offered, that the writer's design was chiefly to exhibit the combined features of those Commentaries which belong to the fourth and fifth classes above described. He has already stated that the elder expositors of Scripture seem to have all written with the same intention; and he likes to believe that

his labours will be found to bear some general resemblance to theirs, as well in respect of matter as manner.—As for *the manner* of those writers, it was,—to avail themselves freely of existing materials: to interweave the words of others with their own: to illustrate Scripture by a large use of Scripture: to be concise in the discussion of technical difficulties,—to be diffuse where important doctrine was involved; or where, in the course of the narrative, they encountered statements which could be turned to the reader's profit. They never slumbered on Holy ground. To detect remote allusions,—to evolve unsuspected meanings,—to vindicate the importance of supposed trifles;—this was all their care. They did not append to the inspired pages a series of unconnected notes, to be referred to by the reader, or not, at his pleasure: but rather, they *discoursed* upon the Gospel, connectedly,—breaking off only to introduce the words of Inspiration; and proceeding again with their running comment.

As for *the matter* of the ancient writers,—it was, to say the truth, seldom altogether new. Novelty, in fact, seems to have formed no distinct part of their plan. *Truth*,—the handing down of *Divine Truth*,—was their great object. To transmit, pure and unpolluted, the current of primitive doctrine; and to extend and enlarge Man's knowledge of the Divine Oracles; was the business of each of the Fathers in turn. To the very full did they admit, (as their writings prove,) that striking sen-

timent of a great modern Doctor, that 'it is not at all incredible that a Book, which has been so long in the possession of mankind, should contain many truths as yet undiscovered'. Far from being servile copyists, the most famous of them were great and original thinkers: bold in their speculations, often to the verge of rashness; so singular in their interpretations, as sometimes to incur the charge of extravagance or puerility. But they knew how to make amends for their occasional falls, by many a flight like the eagle's. In the meanwhile, they shewed clearly by the general resemblance of their method of handling Divine Truth, that they were not solitary and independent dreamers,—like the modern Germans, and the disciples of the German School among ourselves. Reverence, not timidity; sound Theological training, not imbecility of wit; made them—what they are. All this admits of easy illustration; and the subject is at once so interesting and so important, that we shall venture to invite the reader's attention to the following extract from Jerome's preface to his Commentary on St. Matthew:—

'You ask me, my dearest Eusebius, to furnish you with a brief exposition of St. Matthew's Gospel, which you may carry with you in your approaching journey to Rome,—like victual for the voyage. Your pertinacity in requesting such a Commentary, limited in extent yet pregnant in matter, surprises me; and sure am I that, had you

† Bishop Butler.

remembered the answer I made you, you would never have invited me thus to attempt in a few days to execute a task which demands the labour of years.

‘In the first place, it is difficult to go through all the authors who have written about the Gospels. Far more difficult, secondly, is the effort of judgment which is required to make a selection of what is best in each. I admit that I have read, (but it is a great many years ago,) Origen’s twenty-five books of Commentaries on St. Matthew; together with his Homilies, being as many in number, and his Scholia. I have also read the Commentary of Theophilus of Antioch, and of Hippolytus the martyr; those of Theodorus of Heraclea, Apollinarius of Laodicea, and Didymus of Alexandria:—besides, of the Latins, the short works of Hilary, of Victorinus, and of Fortunatianus. And certainly, even a little, picked out of the Commentaries of such writers, would well deserve attention. But you require me, in the space of two weeks,—towards the close of Lent, while the winds are blowing,—to dictate: thus allowing no time for the labour of writing, of correcting, of transcribing,—especially in the case of one like myself, who for three months have been so ill that I have scarcely yet begun to walk about again. The length of time allowed me is not adequate to the magnitude of the undertaking.

‘The result has been, that, laying aside all consideration of ancient authorities, (whom I have no



opportunity either to read or to follow,) I have merely attempted a brief historical exposition (the thing which you said you wished for most: into which I have occasionally interwoven the flowers of spiritual interpretation. A perfect work I reserve for a future opportunity.' So far Jerome.

The inferences which may be drawn from this single passage are neither few nor inconsiderable.

For (1st,) here is one writing a short Commentary on St. Matthew, in A.D. 398, whose direct qualification for the task is found to consist in his acquaintance with what six Greek and three Latin Fathers have already written on the same subject; and he insinuates that, under ordinary circumstances, he should have felt it his duty to study *all* the Commentators, before venturing to put forth a new Commentary of his own.

2ndly, Jerome further implies that in the composition of such a Commentary, his special business would have been to exhibit the cream of what others had written. His labour would have lain rather in the judicious selection of ancient materials, than in the invention of fresh ones.

3rdly, The writers which he enumerates flourished from about A.D. 175 to about A.D. 370. There is therefore nothing to prevent the oldest of them (Theophilus, Bp. of Antioch<sup>ε</sup>;) from having com-

<sup>ε</sup> - The general argument will not be at all affected by the admission,—which ought perhaps in fairness to be made,—that it has been doubted whether the work which Jerome here alludes to was a genuine production of the Father whose name it bore.

versed in his youth with a man who for many years had been a disciple of St. John. That the next in order of time, (Hippolytus,) had conversed with Irenæus, who remembered St. John's disciple, Polycarp,—is matter of history.

4thly, It is observable that the writers whom Jerome names were even more widely severed in respect of locality, than in respect of date. Thus Origen studied at Alexandria,—over the catechetical School of which famous city, Didymus also presided. Theophilus was Bishop of Antioch in Syria: Hippolytus was Bishop of Portus, near Rome; and Theodorus filled the see of his native city, Heraclea, in Thrace. Apollinarius, again, presided over the Church of Laodicea, in Asia Minor. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, is a noble representative of the teaching of the Gallican Church. Victorinus and Fortunatianus were Africans; but the latter was also Bishop of Aquileia in Italy. Although five of these writers therefore may be regarded as Jerome's contemporaries, it cannot be thought that their several productions were the growth of a *single school*. The reverse is the fact.

5thly, It should be observed, in the last place, that of the nine Commentaries thus enumerated, only one, (that of Hilary,) and part of another, (namely, Origen's,) are any longer known to be in existence.

We hesitate not to avow, that the general impression which we derive from such a survey of a single instance, is highly favourable to the claims

of ancient expositions of Holy Scripture on our reverent attention. We entertain no extravagant theory on this subject. We are well aware that the Fathers had no authoritative Tradition, to guide them in the general work of Interpretation. Concerning *Doctrine*, indeed, there *was* such a prevailing Tradition: concerning the meaning of *single texts*, there *was not*. The Fathers are observed to reason about the sense of Scripture exactly as we ourselves reason at the present day: they never pretend to knowledge derived from any private source; and, of really difficult places, (such as abound in the Discourses of our Lord,) there are not unfrequently to be met with as many expositions as there are expositors<sup>b</sup>. But while all this is freely granted, it is yet claimed as equally true that a general consent of Fathers on *great* subjects is observable: as the reference of St. John iii. to Holy Baptism<sup>c</sup>, and even of St. John vi. to the Holy Eucharist. Yet further, where the Fathers are not unanimous as to *what* is the precise mystical meaning of any given transaction, (as that recorded in St. John xix. 34,) they are nevertheless *quite* unanimous in pronouncing that the passage *has* a mystical meaning. There is not one of them who would subscribe to the doctrine of the Rev. Albert Barnes, which we have consigned to the

<sup>b</sup> E. g. on St. John xiii. 34: xx. 17.

<sup>c</sup> 'Of all the ancients,' (says Hooker,) 'there is not one to be named that ever did otherwise either expound or allege the place than as implying external Baptism.'

foot of the page<sup>1</sup>. Above all, there is a family resemblance in the *method* of all ancient expositions of Holy Scripture which vindicates for them, however remotely, a common origin: a resemblance in the general handling of the inspired Word, which can only be satisfactorily explained by supposing that the remote type of all was the oral teaching of the Apostles themselves. For is it credible that the early Christians would have been so forgetful of the discourses of the men who had seen the LORD, that no trace of it,—no tradition of so much as *the manner* of it,—should have lingered on for a hundred years after the death of the last of the Apostles; down to the time when Origen, for example, was a young man? It cannot be! If the Twelve had indeed discoursed concerning the acts and sayings of our Blessed SAVIOUR, in the manner of the Rev. Albert Barnes, will any one believe that, at the end of one or two centuries, Christian writers of the East and of the

<sup>1</sup> 'It is probable, though it is not certainly expressed, that the left side was pierced by the spear. It is evident that the spear reached the heart. . . . The heart is surrounded by a membrane called the pericardium. This membrane contains a serous matter or liquor resembling water, which prevents the surface of the heart from becoming dry by its continual motion. It was this which was pierced, and from which the water flowed. The point of the spear also reached one of the ventricles of the heart; and the blood, yet warm, rushed forth either mingled with, or followed by, the water of the pericardium; so as to appear to St. John to be blood and water flowing together. This was a natural effect, and would follow in any other case.' . . . Observe how quietly the question is begged in the exordium of this dreary passage!—the very introduction of which, in this place, seems to demand an apology.

West, of the North and of the South, could have all been found, with one consent, to write in a style so very dissimilar from that of the American expositor? Nothing short of a general conspiracy in the Church, or a special miracle, would suffice to account for so radical a discrepancy.

We believe, then, that ancient guides are more trustworthy on holy ground, than the moderns. Our reasons for thinking so, moreover, are now before the reader. The remarkable *general* consent,—the occasional *particular* consent,—of many men, writing in remote regions of the Church, about the same period of time; as Basil<sup>k</sup> and the two Gregories<sup>l</sup> in Asia Minor,—Epiphanius<sup>m</sup> in Cyprus,—Ambrose<sup>n</sup> at Milan,—John Chrysostom<sup>o</sup> at Antioch,—Jerome<sup>p</sup> in Palestine,—Augustine<sup>q</sup> in Africa,—and Cyril<sup>r</sup> at Alexandria;—this fact strikes us as a phenomenon truly extraordinary. But when we further discover that it was the practice of those early commentators to borrow largely from their predecessors,—so that, in nine cases out of ten, the author is only handing down to us what another author had first handed down to him; when we can sometimes even trace the footprints of expositors back to the very age of the Apostles themselves, or the age which imme-

<sup>k</sup> Of Cæsarea, A.D. 355—379.

<sup>l</sup> Of Nazianzus, A.D. 355—390: of Nyssa, 370—394.

<sup>m</sup> A.D. 367—403.    <sup>n</sup> A.D. 375—397.    <sup>o</sup> A.D. 381—407.

<sup>p</sup> A.D. 368—430. The date of his Commentary on St. Matthew was A.D. 398,—according to Clinton, whose dates are here followed.    <sup>q</sup> A.D. 386—430.    <sup>r</sup> A.D. 412—444.

diately succeeded theirs ;—our surprise at their general coincidence of teaching, assumes the form of deference, and respect for their opinions. The phenomenon, we perceive, admits of only one explanation ; and these venerable writers command at once the homage of our hearts, and the allegiance of our understandings.

For,—let it be asked in the next place,—What claims on our respect and attention have the moderns, as yet, established? When the modern method differs from the ancient, on what grounds do the moderns recommend their conclusions to our acceptance? The advances which have been made in Scholarship and in Science cannot be alleged in their behalf. Precious helps these are to investigation ; but no one will pretend they can subvert *the method* of it ; any more than recent improvements in the construction of telescopes, because they have made us acquainted with so many unsuspected wonders, have rendered the inductive method of reasoning an effete proceeding ; or falsified the first principles of former mathematicians. How then do the moderns handle the sacred writings? Certainly, if we wanted to characterize their distinctive method by a single word, *irreverence* would be the term which we should apply to it. Were we invited to assign a second characteristic, it would be *shallowness* : if a third, *arrogance*. When the Gospels are in question, we read perpetually of the ‘dislocations,’ the ‘inaccurate memories,’ and the ‘mis-

takes' of 'the Synoptists.' The 'honesty' of supposed 'impostors' is vindicated, or the 'candour' of professing 'witnesses' is pointed out. (It would never be imagined that the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST was the matter in debate! the Apostles of THE LAMB, the subjects of examination!). . . The very origin of the Gospels has proved a fruitful source of prolonged debate,—especially among our German neighbours, who seem to have taken the 'mythical narratives' vulgarly ascribed to St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John, under their especial patronage and protection. Here, the alarming names of Eichorn, Büsching, Vogel, Ammon, Gratz, Ziegler, Weber, Bertholdt, Hug, Kuinoel, Gieseler, Fritzche, De Wette, Lücke, Schleiermacher, Paulus and Strauss, represent the combatants in the internecine strife. In the words of a great and lamented writer\*, (to whose memory the living representatives of this motley crew must bear no particular good-will; )—'Hypothesis here has been knocked down by hypothesis, till the Gospels must begin to feel themselves in a very awkward condition. If they were not written independently,—and that is flatly denied; if one was not copied from another,—and that is almost given up; if they were not derived from a single common document,—and that is growing out of fashion; if oral tradition does not account for their coincidences,—and we are assured that it cannot; at least we may flatter

\* The Rev. Hugh James Rose.

ourselves that they have not many further chances of escape. The method of exhaustion has almost done its work. The last hypothesis, which we think neither the Gospels nor our readers can possibly avoid, will be, that, in spite of *some* evidence from our senses, they were never written at all. This conclusion will be a most valuable adjunct to certain other great discoveries of the day, and will shew in a most striking manner the march of intellect, and our incalculable superiority to our gross and ignorant forefathers.'

In the department of sacred Exegesis, the writers for whom we avow so little partiality appear to us scarcely less objectionable. Do we encounter some deep saying of our LORD? They explain it at once away. Is our attention arrested by some mysterious transaction? The meaning of it is forthwith laboriously evacuated. Commentators of this modern school present us largely with negative statements; and delight in the remarks and the reasonings which they term 'subjective.' But, (what seems unfortunate,) they can never so much as quite agree among themselves as to the very authenticity of the record they profess to illustrate!

Schott and Lücke, we are informed, 'occupy a prominent place among those scholars who deny the authenticity of the whole of the last chapter' . . . of St. John's Gospel. Kuinoel and Weber, on the contrary, flatter themselves that they 'have proved most satisfactorily that no sufficient reason can be



adduced for rejecting the body of the chapter, since *all the manuscripts contain it*; and since the ideas are characteristic of St. John (!!!); and even the language itself presents no distinguishable difference from the style of his composition.' (How candid and considerate of Messieurs Kuinoel and Weber to allow any weight to such a trivial circumstance as the combined testimony of every known manuscript of a Gospel!) Olshausen, however, amiably suggests that perhaps all that Messieurs Schott and Lücke meant was 'that some definite person, such as the presbyter John for example, or even some one unknown, was the author of the chapter.' (What a satisfaction, by the way, it would be to the Church to have this benevolent suggestion confirmed! to be convinced that if the Evangelist St. John did not write his own Gospel, at all events that somebody else,— 'some definite person,'—kindly wrote it for him!) . . . . Olshausen's own private dictum, in the meantime, is that 'the only result of the numerous investigations of this subject which commends itself to the understanding, and is confirmed more and more by inquiry, is that which regards *the last two verses* only as not having been written by St. John.' In this charming forbearance towards the Evangelist, Tholuck agrees with Olshausen. But, (says the latter,) the first half of the chapter 'appears poor and meaningless,'—unless we adopt the symbolical interpretation of the Fathers. It becomes else, 'a lengthened unmeaning preface.'

lot so ! (exclaims an amiable and highly accomplished living writer of our own ; a dignitary too, and one whose writings are held in much esteem :) each 'a lengthened allegory' is 'wholly uncongenial to the usual spirit of St. John's Gospel.' The minuteness which Olshausen finds so 'poor and meaningless' may be accounted for by supposing that St. John 'delighted to record, or that the inquiring disciples would not pause in their questions till they had received, the whole account, even down to the minutest outward details'. . . . Well, (cries the perplexed student,) on *this* head, I may perhaps be permitted to think for myself. Suffer me at least to believe, on *your* authority, that St. John wrote the last chapter of his own Gospel!—Alas, even this miserable solace is denied. There are not wanting,' (says the oracle,) 'indications that the actual composition of it is by another hand than that of the Evangelist himself.' And here he refers, in a note, to the aforesaid *Lücke*.) 'But these difficulties in the outward details of this chapter,' (he continues,) 'are not incompatible with the belief that we have, if not the very words, at least the last recollections of the beloved Disciple; taken down, it may be, from his mouth; or written immediately after his death by the

\* 'Elsewhere so unusual in *St. John's Gospel*,'—adds the writer: whether justly or not, let the readers of St. John's Gospel declare. Consider the following places: chap. ii. 1 to 10: vi. 3 to 14: viii. 1 to 11: xi. 18 to 44: xiii. 4 to 12: xviii. 1 to 18: xix. 17 to 42: x. 3 to 8.

*Ephesian disciples ; but still substantially his own.*  
 . . . . Can it be necessary to point out that conjectures, vague and unsupported and gratuitous as these, (for *reasonings* they may not, by any stretch of courtesy, be called,) are entitled neither to attention nor indulgence ? Much learning the authors of them may possess ; philosophers they may be, and wits, and scholars too : but are such criticisms worthy of *Theologians* ? Are *these*, above all, to be the guides of poor souls hungering for the bread of life,—reaching out for a hand which may sustain their tottering feet, and conduct them to ‘the well-spring of their own everlasting felicity ?’\*

Thus much, then, on the subject of ancient and modern expositors. And *now*, the reason will sufficiently appear why we have prefixed to our poor endeavours, two quotations expressing our own adherence to *the ancients*.—It only remains to speak a little more particularly about what has been here attempted.

If, after all that has been offered in a pre-

\* It would, of course, have been easy to adduce far more flagrant instances of licentiousness, from writers of less respectability than Olshausen, (whose work on the Gospels is full of merit,) and the esteemed author of ‘*Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic age*,’—if the present writer had desired. What has thus been adduced is merely offered as a favourable specimen of the language of a *school*,—the growing popularity of which, among our own people, no thoughtful man can witness without anxiety and apprehension. Pushed to its extreme development, such a method must lead inevitably to aberrations as miserable as those of Paulus and Strauss.

eding page, it should still be objected that the present Commentary is not 'plain' enough for plain readers, the author will but say in his own defence, that he found it practically impossible to say what he wanted to say in much easier language. It sounds like a paradox, but it is obviously true, that very often, in order to explain a difficulty, things must be said which a wholly unlearned person will find even more difficult than the thing to be explained. To be rather shallow in order to be very transparent, formed no part of the writer's plan.

And yet, after a large admission of this kind has been made, he is deeply convinced that what he has written will be found useful to readers of a humble class; *that* class, in short, whose needs he had chiefly in view when he first took up his pen. No Commentary, of course, can reach the unlettered hind who is scarcely able to decypher the sacred text. It is useless to attempt to write books for persons who cannot read. But there is a large, and rapidly increasing class of readers, who, however imperfectly educated, can yet very well pick out the meaning of such remarks as are chiefly met with in these pages. The writer has had many opportunities already of convincing himself of this fact; and because he has cherished the hope to the very last of being useful to such persons, he has invariably contrived that every single chapter shall be comprised within such limits as to be capable of forming a separate tract.—

In parochial schools, — in the hands of the teachers and the elder children, especially, — the work will surely be found useful! Is it beyond the capacity of the better class of domestic servants? of small traders, and artizans? It is even thought that besides its use in the closet, such a work as the present, especially if it be studied for a few minutes beforehand, might be made available for reading aloud in the family.—The engravings, (for which the author is not responsible,) were added in order to make the work more attractive to the class for which it was chiefly designed. It is hoped that they will not repel more fastidious readers.

Something should be said concerning the sources of the present work. The writer has availed himself, in the freest manner, of whatever he has at any time met with, which he thought would serve his present purpose; borrowing something from the most modern as well as from the most ancient sources;—from the excellent ‘Annotations’ of Bishop Lonsdale and Archdeacon Hale, as readily as from the precious fragments of writers of the second century: from Bishop Andrewes, (an expositor of Scripture second to none in ancient or modern times;) Bishop Pearson; Dr. W. H. Mill, and the Rev. Isaac Williams; as freely as from Augustine, and Chrysostom, and Cyril. It seemed to him reasonable and right, moreover, when he met with anything which appeared to him felicitously expressed by another

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writer, to present the passage in that writer's actual words; not to vary the language, in order to make the sentiment look like his own. This will account for the numerous quotations which will be found in the ensuing pages. But it may be necessary to remind the unlearned reader that he is not to suppose, whenever the aid of a modern author is thus invoked, that the sentiment quoted is therefore *peculiar* to that author. The great value of such expositors as Andrewes and Pearson and Mill is rather of the opposite kind; namely, that those men were so deeply imbued with the spirit of Patristic interpretation; had read the Fathers so largely, and to such good purpose; that they were for ever reproducing the ancient and the true expositions of God's Word. Refer to the commentaries of Augustine and Chrysostom, on laying down Andrewes or Mill, and you recognise a hundred expressions immediately,—the germ of many a thought which those men have gracefully or learnedly expanded, and made entirely their own. But indeed it is scarcely needful to make the reference. The fragrance of the honey proclaims plainly enough where the bees have been feeding. . . . . The chief value of such writings, then, proceeds from the very circumstance which imparts such singular importance to the writings of the ancients themselves,—as was explained above, in the instance of Jerome: with this memorable difference however,—namely, that almost all those very ancient Books have long since

perished which supplied Augustine, and Chrysostom, and Cyril, and the rest, with their materials; and further, that the best of the moderns are but learners in a School where *they* filled professorial chairs. Should it not, however, be cheerfully allowed that there arises at least one important counterbalancing consideration, when an ancient exposition is thus re-produced by a modern Doctor; namely, that the sentiment thereby obtains the sanction of an independent mind,—trained under different influences, and furnished with all the appliances of modern learning; superior it may be in judgment, and not unfrequently superior in power;—after having stood the trying ordeal of at least fifteen hundred years?—It may be stated, in conclusion, that the writer would have availed himself far more largely of the ample stores, ancient and modern, which he had at command, but that he prescribed to himself the rule of brevity; in order to produce a Commentary within moderate limits. He was thus often *afraid* to consult fresh authorities; and has always laid down his pen with regret. At the same time, the reader will not be aware *how much* has been offered on any given subject, unless he will be at the pains to refer, when directed, from one part of the Commentary to another. This operation may prove troublesome; but a system of cross references was clearly unavoidable,—unless the same statements were to be repeated again and again in different parts of the work. The materials have

been distributed, according to the writer's best judgment; and the Commentary on each chapter has been made as readable, and it is hoped as interesting, as the narrow limits would allow.

The assistance which has been derived from living authors has been so faithfully acknowledged in the foot-notes, that particular allusion to it is the less necessary here; but the writer feels that he ought to acknowledge his oral obligations to the Rev. Charles Marriott,—whose daily life and conversation has been to him a perpetual Commentary on the Gospel.

Very delightful, lastly,—(why should the writer be ashamed to confess it?)—has been the favourable notice which his labours have from time to time obtained. Very encouraging have those public and private expressions of approval been, and he is very grateful for them. Very serviceable they have also proved: for indeed the labour of producing even a popular Commentary, like the present, is excessive,—far surpassing what most persons would suppose; and though, in this instance, the labour has always been its own abundant and most blessed reward, yet has the writer many a time felt the need of a little encouragement during the countless weary days and nights of prolonged mental activity, which he has been compelled to bestow upon his task,—the difficulties of which he did not by any means foresee when he first undertook it. The dread of incau-



tiously delivering an unsound, or (God forbid!) a heretical opinion: the awful responsibility of having undertaken to explain our SAVIOUR'S discourses and a miserable apprehension at every instant lest he should not be explaining them rightly the constant fear of overlooking something of importance, for want of a little more investigation,—or lest, by yielding to the sense of weariness and fatigue, he should be doing any part of the work in a slovenly manner:—all this produced what was often felt to be a painful tension of the critical faculty. For the sayings of our LORD are so deep<sup>u</sup>, and sometimes, so perplexing<sup>v</sup> the apparently trivial words of Scripture prove not unfrequently, to be so full of unsuspected meaning<sup>w</sup>; the common narrative is so mysterious and divine<sup>x</sup>; that no ordinary vigilance no ordinary amount of painstaking is necessary on the part of a Commentator. It is a very facile proceeding to say a few weak, lifeless words about a hard text; a very laborious one to ascertain what the most judicious of the ancients and moderns have said concerning it. Moreover, it demands a severe exercise of the judgment calmly and dispassionately to decide between rival inter-

<sup>u</sup> E. g. St. John xv. 26; and see xx. 17,—the whole *verse*.

<sup>v</sup> E. g. St. John xiv. 28,—see pp. 628—30.

<sup>w</sup> E. g. St. Luke ix. 31: xvi. 9.

<sup>x</sup> E. g. St. Matthew ii. 23: xxi. 2 to 8. St. Mark xi. 12 to 14. St. John iv. 42,—where see the notes.

ions; to select what seems to be, upon the  
the best; and to present it to the unlearned  
in a few plain words. This kind of labour,  
ered in for about three years;—as well in  
s of sickness and sorrow, as of health and  
amid the pressure of other duties, collegiate  
parochial; and (how often!) during those  
which God has allotted to Man for rest;  
y well crave a little encouragement. The  
r thus adverted to has increased as the work  
roceeded. Whether because the writer grew  
interested in his trade, as well as more skil-  
it,—or because St. John's Gospel invites to  
r research and will have more attention,—  
conscious that his exposition of the last six-  
chapters of St. John, together with the iv<sup>th</sup>,  
he least imperfect part of his entire per-  
nence. Would that the rest were 'like it! . . .  
n truth, the Commentary is *all* so utterly  
rthy of its Divine subject, that, even in  
g down his pen, and invoking a blessing  
is labours,—the blessing of Him by whose  
r the Gospel was given!—he desires nothing  
ich as that its many imperfections may be  
ned: that it may prove of use to many, and  
ctive of mischief to none.

e Author would conclude by gratefully re-  
ng that he has compiled this Commentary,  
e most part, in the shelter of a College,—a  
pensioner on the bounty of one who entered

into rest more than five hundred years ago. I  
has thus endeavoured, (to adopt the language  
pious Bishop Horne,) to give the world some  
count of that time and those opportunities which  
the Providence of a gracious God, and the mun-  
ficence of a pious Founder, have placed with  
his power.

OXFORD,  
*August 21st, 1855.*

A

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON

**Matthew's Gospel**

INTENDED CHIEFLY  
FOR DEVOTIONAL READING.

OPEN THOU MINE EYES : THAT I MAY SEE  
THE WONDROUS THINGS  
OF THY LAW.

BLESSED LORD, WHO HAST CAUSED ALL HOLY SCRIPTURE  
TO BE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING ; GRANT THAT WE  
IN SUCH WISE HEAR THEM, READ, MARK, LEARN, AND  
WARDLY DIGEST THEM, THAT BY PATIENCE, AND COME  
OF THY HOLY WORD, WE MAY EMBRACE AND EVER H  
FAST THE BLESSED HOPE OF EVERLASTING LIFE, WE  
THOU HAST GIVEN US IN OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHR[IST]  
AMEN.

PUT OFF THY SHOES FROM OFF THY FEET :  
FOR THE PLACE WHEREON THOU STANDEST IS HOLY GROUN

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FIRST CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

*1 The Genealogy of CHRIST from Abraham to Joseph. 18 He was conceived by the HOLY GHOST, and born of the Virgin Mary when she was espoused to Joseph. 19 The Angel satisfieth the misdeeming thoughts of Joseph, and interpreteth the names of CHRIST.*

THE book of the generation of JESUS <sup>1</sup> CHRIST, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

THE beginning of the New Testament is meant to remind us of the beginning of the Old. The resemblance in the language<sup>a</sup> implies that there is a certain resemblance between the two Testaments also: so that the one is, in many respects, the very counterpart of the other. They have been compared to the two Cherubims of Glory, which overshadowed the Mercy-seat with their wings, and turned their faces one to another;—between which also God dwelt in brightness, and from between which He communed with men<sup>b</sup>. Genesis v. is found to begin as follows,—‘This is the book of the generations of Adam.’ Now, Adam ‘is the figure of Him that was to come<sup>c</sup>.’

<sup>a</sup> Compare Genesis ii. 4, and v. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Psalm lxxx. 1. Exod. xxv. 20, 22.

<sup>c</sup> Rom. v. 14. See St. John xx. 15, and the note.

The man CHRIST JESUS is the second Adam, in whom we behold the beginning of a new Creation. For, 'if any man be in CHRIST, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.'

Our LORD is here called 'the son of *David*, the son of *Abraham*,' because the promise of the MESSIAH was especially given to those two great Saints; to Abraham,—in Genesis xxii. 18; to David,—in 2 Samuel vii. 12. And 'the son of David' comes before 'the son of Abraham,' in order that 'the stone which the builders rejected' may be made the 'head of the corner.' Take notice that this great truth concludes, as well as begins, the New Testament; for, in the very last chapter of the Book of Revelation, JESUS saith,—*'I am the root and the offspring of David.'*

- 2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat  
3 Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; and Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar.

Besides the Blessed Virgin Mary, only four female names are found in this genealogy,—Thamar, guilty of incest; Rahab, the harlot; Ruth, a Moabitess; Bathsheba, an adulteress. Nothing is said of Sarah, and Rebekah, and Rachel, and the other holy matrons of whom we elsewhere read. Our LORD's descent from these four persons, (*all*, probably, of Gentile extraction,) may have

been recorded, partly in order to intimate the interest which the Gentile world has in CHRIST; and to prepare men's minds for the ultimate call of the Church,—His Spouse,—from among the Heathen: partly, in order to teach us that He came into the world to bear our shame. And we learn from what is here written, that the disgrace of the ancestor is no real blot upon the descendant; who may yet be very holy, and reflect back his own brightness on all who ever went before him.

Concerning Rahab and Ruth however, much is said in the way of actual commendation in Holy Scripture: see the two next notes. And Thamar receives memorable notice in the Book of Ruth<sup>f</sup>. "She hath been more righteous than I," exclaimed the patriarch Judah concerning her<sup>g</sup>. Indeed we should be very careful *how* we venture to speak of persons whose *history* indeed, but not whose *character* is set down in the Book of Life.

The History *may* mislead us, or rather, it may be mistaken by us. For example, few readers of Genesis would have suspected that Esau was in God's sight a 'fornicator,' and 'a profane person'<sup>h</sup>.

And Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat 4  
Aram; and Aram begat Aminidab; and  
Aminidab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat 5  
Salmon; and Salmon begat Booz of Rachab;

<sup>f</sup> Ruth iv. 12.<sup>g</sup> Gen. xxxviii. 26.<sup>h</sup> Heb. xii. 16.



"The harlot Rahab" is one of the "clo Witnesses," whose Faith is noticed by St. J and whose Works are appealed to by St. J ii. 25. For her remarkable history see Josh and vi. This is the only place in the Bible her marriage is recorded.

And Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and begat Jesse;

For the lovely history of Ruth the Moabite see the Book in the Bible which bears her name. It was all in consequence of her faithfulness she won for herself so glorious a place in the Kingdom of Life.

6 And Jesse begat David the king;

David was the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, and "fed his father's sheep at Bethlehem." God "took him from the sheepfolds . . . to Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance."

And David the king begat Solomon (the son of Bathsheba) *that had been the wife of Urias*;

Instead of telling us that this was Bathsheba, the Spirit gives the name of *her murderer's* *band*; and thus reminds us of David's sin and Bathsheba's shame.

7 And Solomon begat Roboam;

The names which follow, (with slight divergence)

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth i. 14—17.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. xvi.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Sam. xvii. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm lxxviii.

ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

ie spelling,) are the names of the kings of  
h, whose acts are recorded in the Books of  
s and Chronicles.

nd Roboam begat Abia ; and Abia begat  
; and Asa begat Josaphat ; and Josaphat  
at Joram ; and Joram begat Ozias ;

is not meant that "Ozias," (that is, Uzziah,)  
*the son* of "Joram" or Jehoram, but his  
dson's grandson ; the names of three kings  
udah are therefore here left out ; namely,  
ziah, Joash, and Amaziah. This reminds us  
there are evil names which God will at last,  
redly, blot out of the Book of Life<sup>o</sup>.

erhaps these three generations are omitted  
use they were the result of the unholy mar-  
e of Jehoram with Athaliah, the daughter of  
wicked Ahab and idolatrous Jezebel<sup>p</sup>. Uzziah,

married Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok the  
st<sup>q</sup>, is the first name which becomes restored  
ie line of our LORD's ancestors after the flesh.

are reminded by all this of the danger, and  
aps the guilt, of contracting marriage with an  
odly family.

nd Ozias begat Joatham ; and Joatham  
at Achaz ; and Achaz begat Ezekias ; and  
kias begat Manasses ; and Manasses be- 10  
Amon ; and Amon begat Josias ; and 11

<sup>o</sup> Exod. xxxii. 33.

<sup>p</sup> 2 Kings viii. 16—18, 26.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Kings xv. 32, 33.

Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon :

This "Jechonias" is called in the Old Testament *Jehoiakim*. Unless the Jechonias in this verse and the next are distinguished, it might be thought that the numbers in ver. 17. do not correspond with the names which had gone before.

12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel ;

The king mentioned in verse 11. was the father of this "Jechonias;" who is called in the Old Testament *Jehoiachin*, or *Jeconiah*, or *Coniah*. The curse of dying childless had been solemnly pronounced upon "Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim," by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah<sup>r</sup>. Salathiel, here mentioned, must therefore have been only his adopted son.

And Salathiel begat Zorobabel ;

Zorobabel, (whose name means " He of the dispersion of Babylon,") was governor of Judah ; a famous type, as well as ancestor of our LORD. He it was who, with Jeshua the high-priest, rebuilt the temple of Jerusalem after the Captivity<sup>s</sup> being sustained in the task by the prophet Haggai and Zachariah<sup>t</sup>. For the sense in which

<sup>r</sup> Jer. xxii. 24—30.

<sup>s</sup> Ezra iii. 2 ; v. 2 ; Hag. i. 14.

<sup>t</sup> See Ezra v. 1 ; Hag. i. 1, 12 ; ii. 2.

Salathiel is here said to have *begotten* Zorobabel, see the note on St. Luke iii. 27.

And Zorobabel begat Abiud ; 13

This only means that Abiud was *descended remotely* from Zorobabel ; he might be called his 'son' in the same way as Joseph, in ver. 20, is called "*son* of David." For Zorobabel's immediate descendants, see 1 Chronicles iii. 19—24. The names which here follow, down to Joseph, are nowhere found in the Bible except in this place.

And Abiud begat Eliakim ; and Eliakim begat Azor ; and Azor begat Sadoc ; and Sa- 14  
loc begat Achim ; and Achim begat Eliud ;  
nd Eliud begat Eleazar ; and Eleazar begat 15  
Matthan ; and Matthan begat Jacob ; and 16  
acob begat Joseph the husband of Mary,  
f whom was born Jesus, who is called  
'CHRIST.

This then is "the genealogy of CHRIST from Abraham to Joseph," as the heading of the chapter rightly informs us. But, since our blessed LORD was born of the Virgin Mary,—it may be asked, Why was not *her* genealogy given rather than Joseph's ? And, since Joseph was not our LORD's real Father, How does *his* descent from David shew that our LORD also was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh" ?

These questions cannot be fully answered in a

<sup>a</sup> Rom. i. 3.

few words. It must suffice to point out that it was necessary at first, to keep the mystery of the Birth of CHRIST hidden from the unbelieving eyes of men, and indeed from the Powers of Darkness also: and *that* was why it seemed good in the providence of God, that Joseph should not only become the Virgin's wedded husband, but be looked upon and be spoken of for a certain space of time as our LORD's Father likewise\*. Accordingly, Joseph's genealogy from David is here given. And next, observe that, in the eyes of a Jew, Joseph's descent from David was quite enough to establish our LORD's legal descent likewise from the same king, notwithstanding His miraculous Birth; because when Joseph married the Blessed Virgin her Holy Son was accounted to be *strictly* Joseph's son, and to be descended from the same line of ancestors as Joseph himself.

But lastly, it is to be borne in mind that, from the very language of Scripture, there can be no doubt that the Blessed Virgin was herself of the same family as Joseph. She came to Bethlehem "to be taxed," as well as her husband<sup>†</sup>; therefore she was of the house and lineage of David, as well as he. The angel promised that the holy Child which should be born of *her*, should occupy "the throne of *His Father* David<sup>‡</sup>;" therefore she must have been of David's line. And Zacharias, who knew the mystery of our Saviour's Birth, blessed

\* St. Matt. xiii. 55; St. Luke ii. 48; iii. 23; St. John vi. 42.

† St. Luke ii. 5.

‡ St. Luke i. 32.

God for having "raised up a horn of Salvation in the house of His servant David".

We must not be surprised to meet with *some* difficulties in a Revelation which comes from God: rather should it surprise us that we meet with so few. Nor is it reasonable that beings like ourselves, who really know nothing more about God and His ways than He has been pleased to tell us, should sit in judgment, as it were, on His Holy Book. Humility is the fitting attitude for the mind which studies divine things: Adoration, the proper business of the heart; and oh! the peace and joy unspeakable which *they* experience, who are content in such a temper to feed upon the Word of Life. Consider such texts as the following: Job xxiii. 12; Psalm i. 2; lvi. 10; cxix. 72, 97, 103, 105, 140, 148, &c.

So all the generations from Abraham to 17 David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto CHRIST *are* fourteen generations.

In the Book of Wisdom<sup>b</sup> it is said, "Thou hast ordered all things in measure, number, and weight."

Three fourteens are 42; which is declared<sup>c</sup> to be the number of the stations of the Israelites, on

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke i. 69.    <sup>b</sup> Wisdom xi. 20.    <sup>c</sup> Numbers xxxiii.

their way from Egypt into Canaan. Just so, are found to be 42 resting places in this G<sup>o</sup>logy, by which the Israel of God are conducted out of the bondage of the world into the promised land of the Gospel,—the glorious liberty of the kingdom of Christ. As a matter of fact, in the G<sup>o</sup>logy there were *more* than 42 stations, just as there were actually more than 42 steps in the G<sup>o</sup>logy<sup>d</sup>. But the same inspiring SPIRIT which instructed the Author of the Book of Numbers exhibits the stations as six times seven, under the guidance of the blessed Evangelist St. Matthew, leading to a similar result.

St. Matthew thus distinguishes *three* periods of time, from Abraham to CHRIST; as Moses defined the limits of *two* earlier periods<sup>e</sup>; these five embrace the whole interval comprehended by the Old Testament. A sixth and seventh period, the Age of the Gospel, extending on from the Advent of our LORD to the end of the world, may be considered to correspond with the *Sabbath* Day of Creation, inasmuch as it presents us with the crowning work of Love, the Man, CHRIST JESUS, the Second Adam. There yet remains to be revealed that eternal Sabbath<sup>f</sup>; of which the rest of the seventh day was but a faint typical image: and the whole will indeed be "*finishe*

## 18 Now the birth of JESUS CHRIST was

<sup>d</sup> See notes on verses 8 and 19.

<sup>e</sup> Gen. v. and

<sup>f</sup> Heb. iv. 9.







NOW THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST WAS ON THIS WISE.

*St. Matthew* i. 18.

his wise: When as His Mother Mary was spoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the HOLY GHOST.

The history of this mighty wonder is given at greater length in St. Luke's Gospel<sup>s</sup>. One Evangelist supplies what the other omits, in order to induce us to study all the four Gospels.

That the Saviour should be born of "a Virgin spoused to a man," as St. Luke speaks<sup>b</sup>, was a part of the Divine contrivance. The secret of His birth was thereby effectually concealed. See the note on verse 16. Also on St. Luke i. 27.

Then Joseph her husband,

19

For, by the Jewish law, an 'espoused' (or  *betrothed* ) woman was reckoned as *a wife*. Consider the language of Deut. xxii. 23, 24.

being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

From this, we gather two things. First, that Joseph was a person of amazing forbearance and tenderness. Secondly, that the Blessed Virgin had kept the miracle of the Incarnation a profound secret even from *him*. She left to God the care of completing His own designs, and carrying out the wonderful work He had begun.

<sup>s</sup> St. Luke i. 26—28.

<sup>b</sup> St. Luke i. 27.

Well would it be for us, if we also, after entire obedience, could be content to leave the issues of events in the hands of God! We act as if we could not trust Him in the commonest matter for a single hour.

- 20 But while he thought on these things, behold the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife;

This was doubtless the Angel Gabriel, who had already conveyed wondrous tidings to Zacharias, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary<sup>1</sup>. Since the holy Angels take so great an interest in the concerns of men, as our Saviour JESUS CHRIST assures us that they do<sup>k</sup>, how must they have delighted in thus ministering to His chosen servants; and rejoiced in every thing that tended to prepare the way for the coming of His Gospel!

for That which is conceived in her is of the HOLY GHOST.

God ended his doubts by sending an angel to reveal to him the innocence of Mary, and the Divinity of her Son,—who derived His birth from Heaven, and was heir of all the world. ‘And in all our doubts,’ says a pious Bishop, ‘we shall have a resolution from Heaven, or some of it

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke i. 19. 26, 27.

<sup>k</sup> See St. Luke xv. 10.

ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

sters, if we have recourse thither for a guide; be not hasty in our discourses, or inordinate in our purposes, or rash in our judgment."

and she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.

Almost every name has a well-known meaning. The name JESUS means *Saviour*: that is why the evangelist says, "*for* He shall save His people."

"JESUS" is the Greek way of writing the Hebrew name Joshua. The famous typical personage who bore the latter name is therefore actually designated "Jesus" in Acts vii. 45, and in Hebrews. Other persons bore the name of Jesus before our LORD: see, for example, Colossians iv. but the name never *belonged of right*, to any but *Him*.

Notice, here, the intimation afforded by the evangelist that the promised Deliverer was to become Head of a *spiritual* kingdom:—"He shall save His people—*from their sins*." As for that expression, "*His people*," consider how "He saith in Osee, I will call them My people which were not My people<sup>1</sup>," for the name belongs to many as have been redeemed to God by the blood of the Lamb "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation<sup>m</sup>:" and was not

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ix. 25.

<sup>m</sup> Rev. v. 9.

confined, as the Jews fondly supposed, to the natural descendants of Abraham. See the note on St. Matt. iii. 9.

It was long before the most enlightened among them were able to realize this great truth. Thus the Apostles are found inquiring of our Blessed LORD, shortly before His Ascension into Heaven, "LORD, wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel<sup>n</sup>?"

- 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the Prophet,

Rather "*spoken by the LORD, through,*" that is, "*by the mouth of*" "the prophet." Compare the language of Acts i. 16. So in ii. 15. More will be found on this subject in the note on St. Luke i. 70.

- 23 saying, Behold, a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.

Isaiah is the prophet here spoken of<sup>o</sup>: this is the first of the many ancient prophecies which St. Matthew notices as fulfilled in the History of our Blessed LORD. It had been pronounced about 750 years before, and yields to none, in its wondrous precision and clearness.

<sup>n</sup> Acts i. 3.

<sup>o</sup> See Isaiah vii. 14.

*ana* means "with us," *El* means "God." In Isaiah viii. 10, where this interpretation of the Hebrew name is found.

that our Saviour *received the name* "Emmanuel" from any one; but in Hebrew, "to be" and "to be," are different ways of saying the same thing. CHRIST JESUS therefore, because "very God of very God," is said to have *called Emmanuel*, when He "dwelt among us." St. John writes, i. 14,) because He *was* and truly, God *with us*.

He never forgets His parting promise to His disciples, the last words of St. Matthew's Gospel, "I am *with you* alway, even unto the end of the world!" "If God be for us," asks St. Paul, "can He be against us?"

In Joseph being raised from sleep did the angel of the Lord had bidden him, look unto him his wife :

Virgin Mary became the wife of Joseph, inasmuch as she had already been espoused<sup>1</sup>. One might think why it was ordained that by a wedded wife the eternal SON should be born into the world, when already assigned in the note to ver. 16. For this precaution on the part of the Most Holy we seem to be further taught that we may not be content with purity of purpose and innocence of intention; but that we must also "pro-

om. viii. 31.

<sup>1</sup> See ver. 18, and note there.

vide things honest in the sight of all men ;” leaving no room for scandal or suspicion, and throwing no unnecessary stumbling-block in the way of others. The most holy Virgin, as her title implies, remained a Virgin all her life. Our blessed LORD, the Only Begotten Son of the FATHER<sup>r</sup>,—was her first-born and her only Son. Yet, in respect of *that* mysterious Child-bearing also, did Mary remain a Virgin : so that she has been compared to the Bush which burned with fire—and yet was not consumed<sup>s</sup>.

- 25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born Son :

Which does not, in the least degree, imply that she ever had *another* : but only, that she had never had a son before this. Every “first-born” was presented unto the LORD,—whence the special notice given to the first-born in the Law of Moses, Exod. xiii. 2 ; xxii. 29 ; and xxxiv. 19 ; Numb. iii. 13 ; viii. 17 ; and xviii. 15 : but this appellation was bestowed without any reference whatever to the children who might (or might not) happen to come after.

Concerning the expression “*till* she had brought forth,” consider the following places of Scripture :—Gen. xxviii. 15 ; Deut. xxxiv. 6 ; 1 Sam. xv. 35 ; 2 Sam. vi. 23 ; Psalm cxii. 8, &c. ; and

<sup>r</sup> St. John i. 14, 18 ; iii. 16, 18.

<sup>s</sup> Exod. iii. 2.

take notice that in none of those places is it by any means implied that, at the period spoken of, the thing *did* happen which is spoken of as not having happened *until* then. See, by all means, in a Bible with references, the marginal note against Daniel i. 21.

and he called his name JESUS.

As Joseph had been commanded by the Angel in v. 21. The Blessed Virgin had received the same command before him<sup>t</sup>. From the special interference of God in the bestowal of names on certain occasions, (as in Genesis xvi. 11; xvii. 5, 15, 19; xxxii. 28, and xxxv. 10; and St. Luke i. 13,) we learn that names ought not to be carelessly and thoughtlessly given, but that we should have a reason to assign for the name we bestow.

The dignity of the very *name* of God may be inferred from that petition in our daily prayer,—“Hallowed be *Thy name*.” In many places of the Bible the Name of God stands for God Himself; as in Psalm xxi. 1, 7; Proverbs xviii. 10, &c.

<sup>t</sup> See St. Luke i. 31.



## The Prayer.

GOD, which makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Thy only Son JESUS CHRIST, grant that as we joyfully receive Him for our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold Him when He shall come to be our Judge; who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the HOLY SPIRIT, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

*Collect for Christmas Day, A.D. 1549.*

# PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE SECOND CHAPTER OF

## St. Matthew's Gospel.

1. *The Wise Men out of the East are directed to CHRIST by a Star.*  
11. *They worship Him, and offer their presents.* 14. *Joseph fleeth into Egypt, with JESUS and His Mother.* 16. *Herod slayeth the children :* 20. *Himself dieth.* 23. *CHRIST is brought back again into Galilee to Nazareth.*

II. Now when JESUS was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came Wise Men from the east to Jerusalem.

These Persian sages are thought to have been of royal, as well as of priestly race; and in their persons may have been first fulfilled those glorious anticipations of the prophet Isaiah:—"Kings . . . shall bow down to Thee, with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of Thy feet<sup>a</sup>." "The Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and Kings to the brightness of Thy rising<sup>b</sup>." "Yea, all Kings shall bow down before Him<sup>c</sup>." See also Psalm lxxviii. 29; lxxii. 10.

<sup>a</sup> Isaiah xlix. 23.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. lx. 3.

<sup>c</sup> Psalm lxxii. 11.

- 2    Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His Star in the East, and are come to worship Him.

“King of the Jews!” a title which attended our Blessed LORD from the cradle to the grave<sup>d</sup>.

Notwithstanding the humbleness of our Redeemer’s birth, it should not escape our notice that the blessed event was carolled by Angels on Earth, and proclaimed by a Star in Heaven. CHRIST was laid in a manger indeed; but Wise Men from the East did Him homage, and confessed that He was “King of the Jews.” The finger of Prophecy pointed Him out to the eye of Faith, from first to last, as the Messiah, the Saviour of the World.

Men are apt to overlook the glories by which the Son of God was attended, even in the lowest depth of His humiliation; simply because those glories were not of Earth, but of Heaven.

- 3    When Herod the King had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Herod was by birth an Idumæan, or Edomite; that is, a descendant of Esau. On this account, as well as because of his cruel and tyrannical conduct, he was far from popular with the Jewish people, (the descendants of Israel,) whom he

<sup>d</sup> See St. Matth. xxvii. 37, &c.

verned. Well may tidings of one that was  
born *King of the Jews*," have "troubled" Herod  
before; inflaming his jealousy, and arousing all  
fears!

And when he had gathered all the chief  
Priests and Scribes of the people together,  
he demanded of them where CHRIST should  
be born.

Observe what important results followed at  
once from the Wise Men's visit to Jerusalem. The  
chief Priests and Scribes were made to bear wit-  
ness to the clear voice of Prophecy; and the at-  
tention of all who looked for redemption in Jeru-  
salem<sup>e</sup> was called to the actual Advent of CHRIST.

There were many holy men among the Jews  
who looked for His coming; as St. Andrew and  
St. John<sup>f</sup>, St. Philip<sup>g</sup> and others of the Apostles.  
Simeon is expressly said to have "waited for the  
consolation of Israel<sup>h</sup>." Joseph of Arimathea also  
waited for the kingdom of God<sup>i</sup>."

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Ju-  
dæa: for thus it is written by the Pro-  
phet,

The Jews knew very well (as we learn from St.  
John vii. 42) that CHRIST was to be born in Beth-  
lehem Ephratah, or, as it was commonly called,

<sup>e</sup> St. Luke ii. 38.    <sup>f</sup> St. John i. 35—41.    <sup>g</sup> Ibid. i. 45.

<sup>h</sup> St. Luke ii. 25.

<sup>i</sup> St. Mark xv. 43.

Bethlehem of Judæa,—to distinguish it from the other village of the same name in the tribe of Zabulon<sup>k</sup>.

- 6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel.

The chief Priests do not repeat the exact words of Micah v. 2, but they give the sense of the prophecy very fairly. It is because they cite that place of Scripture according to the interpretation then current among the Jews; and which is still preserved in their 'Chaldee paraphrase.'

- 7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the Wise Men, enquired of them diligently what time the Star appeared.

He sent for them in private, pretending to take a friendly interest in the tidings they brought, and hoping thereby the better to frustrate the Divine Will which he had just heard declared out of ancient prophecy. He had yet to learn that "the counsel of the LORD standeth for ever<sup>l</sup>;" that "with Him is wisdom and strength: He hath counsel and understanding<sup>m</sup>;" "He is in our mind, and who can turn Him<sup>n</sup>?" "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?"

<sup>k</sup> Joshua xix. 15.

<sup>m</sup> Job xii. 13.

<sup>l</sup> Psalm xxxiii. 11.

<sup>n</sup> Ibid. xxiii. 13.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, 8  
Go and search diligently for the young  
Child; and when ye have found *Him*, bring  
me word again, that I may come and wor-  
ship Him also.

Thus he sent them forth with lying words on  
his tongue, and murderous thoughts in his heart:  
but "the wicked is snared in the work of his own  
hands<sup>o</sup>." "There is no wisdom nor understanding  
nor counsel against the LORD<sup>p</sup>." "He disap-  
pointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their  
hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh  
the wise in their own craftiness<sup>q</sup>."

When they had heard the King, they de- 9  
parted; and lo, the Star, which they saw in  
the East, went before them, till it came and  
stood over where the young Child was.

The star which the Wise Men had seen when  
they were in the East, now appeared again; and  
went before them until, to their infinite joy and  
wonder, it rested and shone steadily above the  
dwelling of the Infant Saviour.

This is enough to shew that what they beheld  
was not one of the stars of Heaven, but some  
bright heavenly body, which shone like a star, and  
appeared for the especial purpose of guiding these  
men, the first-fruits of the Gentiles, to CHRIST.

• Psalm ix. 16.

p Prov. xxi. 30.

q Job v. 12, 13.

The prophecy of Balaam<sup>r</sup> had prepared mankind for such an appearance at the birth of Him who afterwards styled Himself in the Book of Revelation, "the bright and morning *Star*".

- 10 When they saw the Star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

God could have guided the Wise Men all the way from Persia to Bethlehem direct, had He seen fit; but His ways are not like man's ways. He brings about the ends of His Providence by an unexpected, and often unwelcome method; which however, when we look back, we can often discern the reason. For example, it may have been His Divine pleasure to try the faith of the Wise Men by making them repair to Jerusalem in the first instance; and certainly what they heard on reaching the city, must have been an abundant confirmation of their faith<sup>t</sup>. God at last comforts His servants with the sight of the star again, for He is "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort<sup>u</sup>," and never leaves without guidance those who are humbly walking in the way of His Commandments.

- 11 And when they were come into the house they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down, and worshipped

<sup>r</sup> Numb. xxiv. 17.      <sup>s</sup> Rev. xxii. 16. Compare 2 Pet. i. 1:

<sup>t</sup> See also the note on verse 4.

<sup>u</sup> 2 Corinthians i. 3.

Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Pious men have tried to discover the meaning of these three offerings: and that there *is* a meaning for every thing in Scripture is certain, though we cannot always find it out. The Gold is thought to have been an acknowledgment, as well as an emblem, of the Royalty of Christ: the Frankincense, of His Divinity: the Myrrh, of His sufferings and Death. For Gold was given to Kings<sup>x</sup>, and Incense was offered with prayers<sup>y</sup>, and Myrrh was used to embalm mortality<sup>z</sup>.

Hence it is that *prayer* and *incense* came to be so often mentioned together<sup>a</sup>. "Gold" is spoken of in connexion with "Incense" in Isaiah lx. 6. For the use to which Myrrh was applied, see also St. Matthew xxvi. 7, 12, and the parallel places. The word there translated 'ointment,' is '*myrrh*' in the original.

And being warned of God in a dream<sup>12</sup> that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

That is, they returned into Persia by a different way from that which had brought them to Jeru-

<sup>x</sup> See Psalm lxxii. 15.

<sup>y</sup> See Revelation viii. 3, 4.

<sup>z</sup> See St. John xix. 39.

<sup>a</sup> See Psalm cxlii. 2; St. Luke i. 10, 11; Rev. v. 8.



saalem. Thus Herod will have pursued them in vain.

Holy men, in ancient days, feeding upon God's Word, and delighting in it, and seeing instruction in every part of it, found a lesson in what is here stated. It reminded them that the heart which has been once brought to the knowledge of CHRIST, and has bowed down in His presence, and has offered Him of its best, when it goes forth into the world again, will return to its "own country—*another way.*"

- 13 And when they were departed, behold, the Angel of the LORD appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.

These last words remind us that God sees the yet unformed purpose in the heart. "Thou understandest my thoughts long before!" exclaims the Psalmist<sup>b</sup>.

It is said in a certain place, "The Angel of the LORD tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them<sup>c</sup>." Holy Angels still guide the footsteps of the just, and minister to them, although unseen. Notice what is said in the Collect for 'St. Michael and all Angels.' "Are they

<sup>b</sup> Psalm cxxxix. 1.

<sup>c</sup> Psalm xxxiv. 7.

ot all ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister  
r them who shall be heirs of Salvation<sup>d</sup>?"

When he arose, he took the young Child 14  
nd His Mother by night, and departed into  
gypt.

Thus then, from His earliest Infancy, was our  
blessed Saviour exposed to hardship and suffering.  
ready might it have been said of Him, "The  
xes have holes, and the birds of the air have  
ests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay  
his head<sup>e</sup>."

Observe how silently, and how effectually God  
rings about His purposes. The Wise Men,  
oved by a dream, had already set out for the  
ast<sup>f</sup>. Joseph, in the course of the same night  
robably, takes his journey in an opposite direc-  
on. Thus by day-break, there would remain in  
ethlehem no trace of those against whom Herod  
ill soon be "exceeding wroth."

And was there until the death of Herod: 15  
nat it might be fulfilled which was spoken  
f the LORD by the Prophet,

On the expression,—“of the LORD by the pro-  
et,” see the note on i. 22.

saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son.

This is quoted from Hosea xi. 1,—at first sight,  
marvellous application of that prophecy, truly!

Hebrews i. 14. • St. Matthew viii. 20. † St. Matthew ii. 12.

To understand it, we must bear in mind that *CHRIST* was the promised seed<sup>ε</sup>, in whom God's promises to Abraham had their *real* fulfilment. He alone could properly be called God's *Son*: but it had been said of Abraham's descendants, when they were in Egypt, "Thus saith the LORD, *Israel is My son, even My first-born*<sup>h</sup>." What was typically spoken of the children of Israel was therefore actually fulfilled in the person of *JESUS CHRIST*. As the infancy of that nation was cradled in Egypt, so was it with *His* infancy. In both cases, God sent a *Joseph* "to preserve life<sup>i</sup>." In both cases, "there arose up a new King<sup>j</sup>;" and lo, in both cases, "the LORD" called His Son "out of Egypt."

How, at every stage of our Blessed LORD's history, are we reminded that the Old Testament in its narratives, no less than in its prophecies, is full of *Him*! (Consider St. Luke xxiv. 27, 44, 45; St. John v. 46; Acts xxviii. 23.)

- 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the Wise Men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the Wise Men.

<sup>ε</sup> Galatians iii. 16.

<sup>i</sup> Genesis xlv. 5.

<sup>h</sup> Exodus iv. 22.

<sup>j</sup> Exodus i. 8.

The Infant Saviour has Infant Martyrs! Thus children are held up to our admiration from the very first,—in their deaths as in their lives, a pattern to older Christians<sup>k</sup>.

These Mothers of Bethlehem must have thought themselves supremely miserable; the most afflicted of God's creatures: but they little knew their blessedness! Their murdered Innocents evermore lead the van in 'the Noble Army of Martyrs:' and are honoured by the Church's yearly Festival which bears their name. Now, "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope<sup>l</sup>."

It is worth observing that when Herod persecuted our LORD, we behold the remote descendant of Esau, the elder brother, persecuting the remote descendant of Jacob, the younger<sup>m</sup>. As once "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and said, . . . Then will I slay my brother Jacob<sup>n</sup>;"—so was it now. The enmity of the brothers survived in the persons of their remote descendants. Consider the following texts: 1 Sam. xxi. 7; xxii. 9, 18, 19, 22; Obadiah 9—14; St. Mark vi. 17, 27; St. Luke xxiii. 11; Acts xii. 1—3, &c.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken 17 by Jeremy the Prophet, saying,

<sup>k</sup> St. Matthew xviii. 2.

<sup>m</sup> See note on verse 3.

<sup>l</sup> Romans xv. 4.

<sup>n</sup> Genesis xxvii. 41.

- 18 In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

These words are found in Jeremiah xxxi. 15. The prophecy received an immediate fulfilment when the descendants of Rachel, who were being carried away captive to Babylon, were led past her tomb°. She whom Jacob had buried “in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem<sup>¶</sup>,” was then, by a beautiful poetical figure, said to weep passionately for her offspring, because she beheld them taken from her. The bereaved Mother sends up a cry of agony from the very chamber of Death!

But this prophecy was far more strikingly fulfilled in the days of the Gospel, when the children of the same Mother were cut off, as it seemed, without any hope of return.

Yet, consider the message of the Prophet<sup>¶</sup>; and take note in what a far higher sense his words were fulfilled in the persons of the Holy Innocents.

- 19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an Angel of the LORD appeareth in a dream to  
20 Joseph in Egypt. Saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His Mother, and go into the land of Israel: they are dead which sought the young Child's life.

° Jeremiah xl. 1.    ¶ Genesis xxxv. 19.    ¶ Jeremiah xxxi. 16, 17.

You will find that these last words were also spoken to Moses, who was a type of CHRIST<sup>r</sup>. Holy scripture often reminds us, in this manner, of types and figures; thus guiding us by the hand, as it were, to much of its hidden teaching. Compare for example Genesis xxviii. 12, with St. John i. 52; and see the note on St. Matthew i. 1, and i. 4.

During the last few weeks of Herod's life, he had a horrible disorder of which he died in a dreadful manner, about the month of March, four years before the common account called Anno Domini, i.e. B.C. 4; at which time our Blessed SAVIOUR may have been about half a year old.

And he arose, and took the young Child 21 and His Mother, and came into the land of Israel.

Thus, at a Passover time, (for it was just before a Passover that Herod died,) did *He* come up out of Egypt, of whom Israel was a type<sup>s</sup>.

How are we reminded by this complicated history, of that earlier page of the Bible which records God's no less marvellous dealings with His typical son, the children of Israel! Surely, no strangeness in the Divine method with respect to ourselves, should ever stagger us, after what Revelation has recorded concerning the histories of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, of Joseph and of David, even of the Incarnate SON.

<sup>r</sup> Exodus iv. 19.

<sup>s</sup> Deuteronomy xvi. 1.

- 22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judæa in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

Judæa became the scene of tumults after the death of Herod; every part of the country was infested by lawless bands of armed men. Joseph therefore trembled for the Holy Child. But the Angel who had guided him into Egypt, and brought him tidings of Herod's death, now warns him in which direction to bend his footsteps.

All these things happened for our example. "I will never leave *thee* nor forsake *thee*," says GOD ALMIGHTY. He has never yet forsaken those who did not first forsake Him.

For a few words concerning Archelaus, see the last note on St. Luke iii. 1, 2.

- 23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

No one particular place of Scripture is here referred to. This was spoken by "*the Prophets*."

The Hebrew word *Neser* means 'a branch;' and from this word, the name of the town called Nazareth, (which should not be written with a *z*),

derived. The HOLY SPIRIT therefore here informs us, that when our LORD went to dwell at Nazareth, and was called a *Nazarene*, all those prophecies found fulfilment which spoke of Him as THE BRANCH. For example, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a BRANCH shall grow out of his root<sup>t</sup>." Again, "Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH<sup>u</sup>." See also Isch. iii. 8; and Jeremiah xxiii. 5; and xxxiii. 15.

A *Nazarite* and a *Nazarene* are wholly different. John Baptist was a *Nazarite*<sup>x</sup>: which our LORD expressly says that He Himself was not<sup>y</sup>.

This may seem a strange explanation of the text, but it is the only *true* explanation of it. How wonderful then, is the mind of the *SPIRIT*, and in what unexpected ways is God found to fulfil His words! "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out<sup>z</sup>."

<sup>t</sup> Isaiah xi. 1.    <sup>u</sup> Zechariah vi. 12.    <sup>x</sup> See St. Matth. iii. 4.

<sup>y</sup> St. Matthew xi. 19.

<sup>z</sup> Romans xi. 33.



## The Prayers.

**O** GOD, who by the leading of a Star didst manifest Thy Only-Begotten SON to the Gentiles; Mercifully grant that we which know Thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

**O** ALMIGHTY God, who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast ordained strength, and madest Infants to glorify Thee by their deaths; mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by Thy grace, that by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith, even unto death, we may glorify Thy holy Name; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE THIRD CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

*1 John preacheth: his office: life, and baptism. 7 He reprehendeth the Pharisees, 13 and baptizeth CHRIST in Jordan.*

III. IN those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

The time here spoken of, was about thirty years after the Birth of CHRIST. John the Baptist, whose miraculous birth St. Luke describes<sup>a</sup>, was then sent to prepare the SAVIOUR's way.

Consider how this man,—“a Prophet, yea and more than a Prophet<sup>b</sup> ;” nay, consider how CHRIST Himself, “the latchet of whose shoes” the Forerunner was “not worthy to stoop down and unloose<sup>c</sup> ;”—appeared not in public, nor commenced His Ministry, till He “began to be about thirty years of age<sup>d</sup>.” Surely, the consideration of these examples should act as a check and curb; inspire

<sup>a</sup> i. 5 to 25, and 57 to 80.

<sup>b</sup> St. Mark i. 7.

<sup>b</sup> St. Matthew xi. 9.

<sup>d</sup> St. Luke iii. 23.

modesty and distrust, in those who are called to the Ministry of CHRIST'S Church; even when there may be no lack of ability and true piety "Good fruit may be plucked too green; which let alone awhile to ripen, would prove much more pleasant and profitable."

Archbishop Leighton, (the author of the foregoing remark,) points out that, in the case of our Incarnate LORD and His Forerunner,—(if it be lawful thus to name the two together,)—their long lying hid is so much the more remarkable inasmuch as, besides their singular fitness for appearing much sooner, they had so short a time allotted for their course: the Forerunner, about one year; and our LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself but about three years and a half.

- 2 and saying, Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

It appears from St. Matthew iv. 17, that this was the subject of our LORD'S preaching also. The Forerunner's doctrine, (it has been said,) was to the sermons of JESUS, as a preface to a discourse; and his Baptism, was to the discipline of the Kingdom, as the Vigil to a Holiday,—of the same kind, in a less degree.

The same as this of St. John Baptist, and our SAVIOUR, was the message of the Twelve Apostles likewise.—It is only by Repentan

• St. Matthew x. 7.

that we can become fit to receive the message of the Kingdom. Self-denial is necessary to prepare us to receive the Grace of God.

For this is He that was spoken of by the 3 prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make His paths straight.

In such language had the prophet Isaiah, more than 700 years before, foretold the Baptist's office<sup>f</sup>. So true is that saying of St. James,—“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world<sup>g</sup> !”

“This suits well with the foregoing sum of the Baptist's preaching, and is in effect the same with it. “*Repent*,” is,—“Prepare the way of the LORD, make His paths straight.” Repentance levels the heart to God; makes it a plain for CHRIST to walk in; casts down the Mountains of Pride; and raises the soul from base, low, earthly ways and affections; smooths the rugged passions, and straightens the crooked deceit of the heart; makes it sincere and straight, both towards God and Man. And this is our business,—to be dealing with our hearts, levelling, smoothing, straightening them for our LORD; that He may take delight to dwell and walk in them, and refresh them with His presence. And certainly, the more holy diligence is used in suiting the

<sup>f</sup> Isaiah xl. 3.

<sup>g</sup> Acts xv. 18.

heart to His holy will, the more of His sweet presence shall we enjoy." So far, pious Leighton.

- 4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

By this description of the Baptist's attire, we are reminded that *he* was the person whom the prophet Malachi foretold, iv. 5, 6; for Elijah is said to have worn the self-same dress. See 2 Kings i. 8; —where it is described in the self-same words: and read the note on St. Matthew ii. 20.

The Old Testament, because it ends with that prophecy concerning John the Baptist, has been said to *expire with the Gospel on its lips*.

In his hard fare, and severe mode of living<sup>h</sup>, the Baptist is a rebuke to the luxurious and self-indulgent. He tasted neither wine nor strong drink<sup>i</sup>; but was a Nazarite from his mother's womb<sup>k</sup>. God fed him with locusts; concerning which, see Leviticus xi. 22: and satisfied him with "honey out of the stony rock," as it is said in Psalm lxxxi. 16. His dwelling-place was the Wilderness<sup>l</sup>; which means not, a region where none abide: but a retired, and less peopled place. And this is "for the example of all the messengers of God; to live, as much as may be, in

<sup>h</sup> See St. Matthew xi. 18.

<sup>k</sup> Numbers vi. 2, 3.

<sup>i</sup> St. Luke i. 15.

<sup>l</sup> St. Luke i. 80.

air condition and station, disengaged from the world; not following the vain delights and ways of it; not bathing in the solaces and pleasures of it, and entangling themselves in the cares of it: but sober, and modest, and mortified in their way of living; making it their main business not to please the flesh; but to do service to their LORD, to walk in His ways; and prepare the way for Him in the hearts of His people." The words are, once more, Leighton's.

Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all the land, and all the region round about Jordan. And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

How passing wonderful must have been the influence which could produce such a result as this!—a result which is yet indicated, rather than described by the Evangelist. Holy Scripture, by such brief statements, seems often to force us, as we were, to reflect on the majesty of all that it leaves unsaid. Consider St. Matthew xxvii. 54; xxviii. 4; St. Mark ix. 15; St. Luke ii. 13, 14; (where see the note); St. John xviii. 6, &c. &c. &c.

We must put together all the scattered hints we possess:—the miraculous birth, and the name bestowed by an Angel's lips<sup>m</sup>; of which events some traditional knowledge may have got spread abroad: the thirty long years of hardship and

<sup>m</sup> See the notes on St. Luke i. 13.

privation, silence and seclusion from the world suddenly brought to an end: the austere life, and stern aspect: the reputation of extraordinary personal sanctity: the summons to repentance and amendment of life; of which, water-Baptism was the well-known type or emblem: the soul-stirring Voice, which all men might now hear crying: the wilderness: the rough garb, which recalled Elijah the prophet,—and the mortified exterior which bespoke contempt of the world, its pomp and its pleasures: the claim to occupy a place in the page of unfulfilled prophecy:—all this, joined to the national belief that Messiah was indeed shortly about to appear, and the Preacher's plain avowal that his own office was but to prepare Messiah's way before Him;—all this, I say, may help us, in part, to understand why the wonderful results here described, should have followed so speedily, on the Baptist's preaching.

- 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, which hath warned you to flee from the wrath that cometh?

These were stern words to address to the Pharisees, who were "the most straightest sect" of the Jewish religion, as St. Paul declares in Acts xxvi. 5. But our SAVIOUR employed terms of even greater severity towards them; see St. Matthe

xiii. 13 to 33. We are thereby reminded that "the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on *the outward appearance*, but the LORD looketh on *the heart*."<sup>a</sup>

It is not to be doubted that among their number were *some* sincere persons; but, as a body, they must have been proud, uncharitable, and self-righteous; of a character, wholly unlike that which God approves. See St. Matthew v. 3 to 10; and the notes on St. Luke iii. 7.

Bring forth fruits therefore meet for repentance:

John's Baptism was a 'Baptism of Repentance'.<sup>o</sup> He therefore warns these men, who sought the blessing of his Baptism, that they must prove their repentance *sincere* by leading *a more holy life*. He exhorts them to make their conduct answer to their profession.

and think not to say within yourselves, 9 We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

The Jews relied on their descent from Abraham, for favour and acceptance with God<sup>p</sup>. It was only the more spiritually minded among them who understood that "Abraham's children" were they who *did the works* of Abraham<sup>q</sup>; and that

<sup>a</sup> 1 Samuel xvi. 7.

<sup>o</sup> Verse 11, see also Acts xiii. 24.

<sup>p</sup> See St. John viii. 33, 39.

<sup>q</sup> St. John viii. 39.



“he is a Jew which is one *inwardly*.” “For,” as St. Paul explained to the nation, “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel<sup>a</sup> ;” but, “the Israel of God<sup>t</sup>” are “such as are of a clean heart<sup>u</sup>.” “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children<sup>x</sup> ;” but, as the same Apostle teaches in another place, “they which are of Faith, the same are the children of Abraham<sup>y</sup>.”

The Baptist, who was preaching in the rocky wilderness of the Jordan, reminds his hearers, that “*of these stones,*” God could create for Himself a people at His will; and the HOLY SPIRIT, by the Baptist’s preaching, solemnly warns us also not to rely on our privileges as a Church and Nation; but *to bring forth fruits worthy of our high calling*. The heart is for ever prone thus to lean on external advantages. How singular a parallel is presented by the Christian Church, as it is now in the world, with the Jewish Church in the days of the Son of Man! See the second note on St. Luke iii. 8.

- 10 And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

A woodman, before he begins to fell a tree,

<sup>a</sup> Romans ii. 28, 29

<sup>t</sup> Galatians vi. 16.

<sup>u</sup> Romans ix. 7.

<sup>x</sup> Romans ix. 6.

<sup>y</sup> Psalm lxxiii. 1.

<sup>y</sup> Galatians iii. 7, 9, 29.

lays the sharp edge of his axe to the place where he means to aim his first blow; he gives warning, as it were, that he is about to strike. Just such a merciful warning did the Baptist's preaching convey to each of those who heard him. "*Now*," said he, "the axe is laid." Our Blessed LORD uses the same figure. See vii. 19: and St. Luke xiii. 6 to 9.

I indeed baptize you with water unto re-  
 pentance: but He that cometh after me is  
 mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not  
 worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with  
 the HOLY GHOST, and *with* fire:

Alluding chiefly\* to what took place on the day of Pentecost, see Acts ii. 3 and 4. But every Christian, at his Baptism, is "*born of water and of the Spirit*;" and in this, lay the great difference between John's Baptism, and Christian Baptism. John's Baptism did not convey the gift of the HOLY GHOST: CHRIST's Baptism *did*. See the note on St. Luke iii. 16.

Concerning the general meaning and intention of John's Baptism, see the second note on St. Mark i. 5. Next, observe how careful is the Forerunner found, on all occasions, to abase himself and to magnify his Master!—Lastly, compare the opposite meanings of the concluding word in verses 11 and 12; and consider that "we

\* See Acts i. 5.

\* 1 John iii. 5.

must be either baptized in *this* fire, or burned in *that* !”

12 Whose fan *is* in His hand, and He will  
thoroughly purge His floor,

That is,—this is a sifting and a trying time. The unfruitful shall now be taken away; cut down and given to destruction. Now also shall light hearts, and vain minds be winnowed out from among the just, and become as fuel for the fire. “Where the Gospel comes in greatest power, *there* is the most certain and the saddest weight of judgment on the unbelieving and impenitent, the formal and fruitless.”

Consider, in connexion with this intimation of the searching character of our LORD’s coming, the following places of Scripture,—Zechariah xiii. 9: Malachi iii. 2 and 3: 1 Corinthians iii. 13: St. Luke ii. 35. And notice, that the same quality which is ascribed to the personal Advent of CHRIST, is ascribed also to His Written Word,—Jeremiah xxiii. 29: Hebrews iv. 12: St. John xii. 48. Compare 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

and gather His wheat into the garner;  
but He will burn up the chaff with un-  
quenchable fire.

The Wheat, and the Chaff; the Good, and the Wicked; the Heavenly Garner, and the Fire unquenchable: no mention is any where made of

*third* class of persons : no promise is any where and of a *third* place !

How mercifully has the Holy Spirit of God ordained that the commonest sights shall remind us of the things which concern our peace ! Henceforth, Fan, Flail, and Threshing-floor, become all of Christian teaching. Not, however, that there is any thing *new* in these images, as found on the pages of the New Testament. The Eternal Son, by His Spirit, had taught His Servants, in every age, to discern the same solemn lessons in the same familiar objects. See Isaiah xli. 15, 16 : Jeremiah li. 33 : Job xxi. 18 : Psalm i. 4 and xxv. 5 : Isaiah xvii. 13 and xxix. 5 : Hosea xiii. 1 : also Malachi iv. 1.

Then cometh JESUS from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

CHRIST comes to His servant, John the Baptist. The greater comes meekly to the less. Our LORD is a pattern to us in all things. See the note on St. Luke i. 44.

In St. Mark's Gospel<sup>b</sup> we are told that it was from Nazareth of Galilee, where He had been brought up, that our LORD came.

But John forbade Him saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me ?

<sup>b</sup> i. 9.

John sought to prevent our LORD, and spake the words here recorded, because he was well aware of the perfect holiness of our SAVIOUR's character; not because he yet knew for certain that his mighty Kinsman was the Son of God. He did not know *that* until *after* the Baptism, as we are told in another place<sup>c</sup>.

- 15 And JESUS answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.

Our SAVIOUR came to fulfil the Law, as He Himself said<sup>d</sup>, and therefore He conformed Himself to all its requirements: setting us an example, and teaching us the duty of conformity and obedience. It was for our sake alone that He was baptized in the river Jordan,—thereby for ever consecrating the nature of water to the mystical washing away of sin. He did not require ‘the Baptism of Repentance for the Remission of sins,’ because He, (and He *alone*,) was without sin: yet, inasmuch as He had taken our nature upon Him, it was fitting that He should perfectly accomplish in His own person all that must afterwards be fulfilled in the person of each of His members. Hence it is that we shall behold Him, in the next chapter, tempted; afterwards, hungering and thirsting; then, taking our infirmities, and bearing our

<sup>c</sup> St. John i. 31 and 33.

<sup>d</sup> St. Matthew v. 17.

sicknesses<sup>e</sup>; lastly, submitting Himself to Death. Hence it was that He descended into Hell, rose again from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. It was for our sakes that *He* did all these things Who had clothed Himself with our common Human Nature.

Even the renewed unction of the HOLY GHOST here recorded, was for our sakes likewise; for since our LORD was "conceived by the HOLY GHOST," He had been sanctified thereby since the time of His Incarnation. But it was to teach us that in Holy Baptism there must needs be the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT.

The few words here spoken, are the only recorded words addressed by "the Bridegroom" to His "Friend." We know that the sound of that blessed voice, filled the Forerunner's heart with joy unspeakable. See St. John iii. 29.

Then he suffered Him.

Our Blessed LORD's reply satisfied the scruples of the Baptist. To ourselves,—what page of Holy Writ does not seem to require an interpreter?

He,—“the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world<sup>f</sup>.” He,—the “Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness<sup>g</sup>,”—here humbles Himself to be baptized. On this, the pious writer already quoted, exclaims,—“Oh, that we who are

<sup>e</sup> St. Matthew viii. 17.

<sup>f</sup> St. John i. 29.

<sup>g</sup> Zechariah xiii. 1.

baptized, had more of His likeness in this humble reverence for Divine ordinances ; looking on them as *His*, in every warranted hand ! What though he that teaches be less knowing and less spiritual than thou that hearest ? one, that might rather learn of *thee* ? Yet, the appointment of God obliges thee to attend to his ministry as humbly, and with as much regard, as if he were an Angel.<sup>a</sup>

- 16 And JESUS, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water : and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the SPIRIT of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him :

Such was the sign which had been promised to John, whereby he should know the Messiah<sup>b</sup>. JESUS of Nazareth was thus declared to be the CHRIST, and pointed out to the world as by the finger of God<sup>i</sup>.

The HOLY SPIRIT may have chosen to appear in the shape of a dove, not only because that bird is the emblem of meekness, gentleness, innocence<sup>k</sup>, attributes which were so conspicuous in our Divine Master<sup>l</sup>; qualities which, as we are hereby reminded, ought ever to distinguish the spiritual man also<sup>m</sup>; but further in order to recal the

<sup>a</sup> See St. John i. 33.

<sup>b</sup> Compare St. Matthew xii. 28, and St. Luke xi. 20.

<sup>k</sup> St. Matthew x. 16.

<sup>l</sup> Isaiah xlii. 1—3 ; lxi. 1 ; St. Matthew xi. 29.

<sup>m</sup> 1 Thessalonians ii. 7 ; 2 Timothy ii. 24, 25 ; Titus iii. 2 ; St. James iii. 17 ; 2 Corinthians xiii. 11 ; Romans xii. 18, &c.

blessed office which the same Bird discharged in the days of Noah<sup>a</sup>. It was a Dove which then, as now, brought to him who represented the Human Race, the comfortable pledge of restored mercies; announced that God was reconciled to a guilty World; and proclaimed that 'Old things had passed away, behold all things were become new.' Noah's Ark was the type of the Christian Church, (as we read in the Baptismal Service;) and that Church was as yet in CHRIST.

And lo a voice from Heaven, saying, 17  
This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.

This visible display of Divine Power and Love is recorded to have occurred at our SAVIOUR'S Baptism, in order to teach us what happens, although unseen, at ours. The HOLY SPIRIT then descends, and takes up His abode with us. By adoption, we then become 'children of God.'

In the former verse, mention was made of God the HOLY GHOST. Here, God the FATHER proclaims the Eternal and Beloved SON. The chapter which contains this glorious manifestation of the ever - Blessed TRINITY is accordingly appointed to be the Second Lesson on Trinity Sunday.

How marvellously do the Old and New Testaments correspond! There had been a manifestation resembling the present, "In the beginning." "The SPIRIT of God moved upon the face of the

<sup>a</sup> Genesis viii. 11. Consider 1 Peter iii. 20, 21.



waters; and GOD said, Let there be Light, and there was Light!" The first chapter of Genesis is, accordingly, another of the proper Lessons for Trinity Sunday.

But our SAVIOUR, "by Whom all things were made," often declared of Himself, "*I am the Light of the world;*" "*the true Light, which lighteneth every man:*" and this was His Epiphany or Manifestation to the world. Here was a fresh "Beginning," therefore; and "the SPIRIT of God" is found to have once more "moved upon the face of the waters°."

## The Prayer.

**A**Lmighty GOD, by whose Providence Thy Servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of Thy SON our SAVIOUR, by preaching of Repentance; make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and after his example constantly speak the Truth, boldly rebuke Vice, and patiently suffer for the Truth's sake; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

° Genesis i. 2.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FOURTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

1 CHRIST fasteth, and is tempted. 11 The angels minister unto Him. 13 He dwelleth in Capernaum, 17 beginneth to preach, 18 calleth Peter, and Andrew, 21 James, and John, 23 and healeth all the diseased.

THE Temptation of our Blessed LORD, with which the fourth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel commences, is an event of such unusual interest and of such overwhelming importance; so astonishing in its details, and so tremendous in its consequences; that the reader's attention must be invited to a few introductory remarks, in order that he may study with more delight and profit what is to follow.

It must be borne in mind, then, that the glorious object with which our Saviour CHRIST came into the World was to recover for the Human Race, in His own person, that which it had lost in the persons of our first parents, at the Fall. For this purpose, He "was *made flesh*, and dwelt among us<sup>a</sup>:" hence, JESUS CHRIST is called "the second Adam,"—being the beginning of a new

<sup>a</sup> St. John i. 14, on which place see the note.

Creation. He came to restore our ruined Nature, and, by undoing the ancient curse, to win back for mankind an entrance into Paradise<sup>b</sup>. The first step towards this blessed end was the effectual *resistance* of him to whose seductions Adam had *yielded*,—the conquest of Satan, who before had been conqueror<sup>c</sup>. For, “as by one man Sin entered into the world, and Death by Sin . . . even so” was it ordained that “by the Righteousness of One, the free gift should come upon men into Justification of life:” that “as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, by the obedience of One should many be made righteous<sup>d</sup>.” These remarks will sufficiently explain how it happens that the Temptation of CHRIST by Satan, stands on the very threshold of the Gospel History.

The first hint contained in the Old Testament Scriptures of what was to follow, is found Genesis iii. 15,—where it is darkly prophesied that the Seed of the Woman,—(that is, some one mysteriously born of one of Eve’s descendants without a human Father,) should “bruise the Serpent’s head.” As time went on, that ancient prophecy grew more and more explicit; as a reference to Isaiah vii. 14, will shew. This Deliverer of the Human Race, promised at first generally to our first Parents,—then, limited to the first d

<sup>b</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 43, and the note there.

<sup>c</sup> See 1 St. John iii. 8.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. v. 12, 18, 19.

scendants of Abraham<sup>e</sup>,—and afterwards restricted to the posterity of Judah; was at last confirmed with an oath to the line of David the King<sup>f</sup>.

Meanwhile, the prophet Isaiah actually *described* the wondrous Being who was to prove the Saviour of Israel<sup>g</sup>. Daniel fixed *the time* of His coming, by defining the interval “unto the Messiah, the Prince<sup>h</sup>.” Each succeeding prophet, with astonishing minuteness, added some touches to the picture:—one, mentioning the place of His Nativity<sup>i</sup>;—another, foreseeing the number of pieces of silver for which He should be sold<sup>k</sup>;—another, discerning the Forerunner, who should come to prepare His way<sup>l</sup>: until the fulness of time arrived, and mankind became aware that “the Desire of all nations” must be very nigh,—even at the doors.

Let it be observed, that while the whole Human Race was in expectation of such a Deliverer, the Devil,—“that old Serpent<sup>m</sup>,”—cannot be supposed to have been unconscious of men's hopes; still less, to have been unconcerned in their frustration. He had acquired by usurpation, a wonderful dominion over the bodies, as well as the souls of men,—as many a passage in the Gospel proves. Consider St. Luke xiii. 16,—the daughter of Abraham, *whom Satan had bound* for eighteen

<sup>e</sup> Gen. xxii. 18.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Sam. vii. 12; Ps. cxxxii. 11.

<sup>g</sup> Is. li.

<sup>h</sup> Daniel ix. 25.

<sup>i</sup> Micah v. 2.

<sup>k</sup> Zech. xi. 12, 13.

<sup>l</sup> Malachi iii. 1, iv. 5, 6.

<sup>m</sup> Rev. xii. 9.

years: and Acts x. 38,—where St. Peter describes our LORD as healing all those who were *tyrannized over by the Devil*. Consider also Acts xxv. 18. Satan had been like “a strong man armed, keeping his goods in peace,” for 4000 years. He had every thing to fear from the coming of “one stronger than he!” And such an One the voice from Heaven, recorded in the last verse of the former chapter, had proclaimed. With mingled surprise and consternation, therefore, at the announcement that the SON OF GOD stood on the banks of the Jordan, we may presume him to have hastened thither at once: to have followed the Holy Object of his fear and hate to the Wilderness; and there to have availed himself of the hour of faintness and extremity, to commence his most fierce assault. See the note on St. Luke iv. 2.

There must have been *surprise*, as well as consternation, on the part of the Enemy of Mankind. The Messiah had been promised to the Royal House of David<sup>o</sup>: but the Royalty had long since departed from Judah. The Messiah was to have been born in Bethlehem<sup>p</sup>: but CHRIST had come to His baptism from Nazareth<sup>q</sup>, having passed almost the whole of His previous life in this city<sup>r</sup>. Above all, a *Virgin* was to have been His

<sup>o</sup> St. Luke xi. 21, 22.

<sup>o</sup> See the references above, in note 1.

<sup>p</sup> Micah v. 2.

<sup>q</sup> St. Mark i. 9.

<sup>r</sup> St. Matt. ii. 23.

ther<sup>s</sup>: but Mary was married<sup>t</sup>, our LORD being (as was supposed) the Son of Joseph<sup>u</sup>.” The Arch-Fiend must therefore have been as confounded as he was terrified by the announcement which now brought him into the presence of the Son of Man; and he came not by deputy, but in person, in order that he might the better make trial of His pretensions, and ascertain the strength of Him with whom he had to do.

In what follows, therefore, we are permitted to witness the most wonderful scene, perhaps, in the whole Book of God's Revelation:—one, which is nothing *but* a Revelation from Him could have discovered to us. The Eternal Son, encompassed with all the infirmity of our Nature, is about to counter face to face the Enemy of our Salvation. Guided therefore by the HOLY SPIRIT, He withdraws into the Wilderness, for the special purpose of being tempted.

Then was JESUS led up of the Spirit 1

“Then,”—that is immediately after His Baptism<sup>v</sup>: as if to remind us that this Life is from the very first a scene of Trial; and also to teach that, until strength has been given in the blessed Sacrament of Baptism, the Christian Soldier is not fit to encounter the seductions of the Devil, the World, and the Flesh.—See the

<sup>t</sup> Isaiah vii. 14.      <sup>u</sup> St. Matt. i. 24.      <sup>v</sup> St. Luke iii. 23.  
<sup>v</sup> Compare St. Mark i. 12, and St. Luke iv. 1.

notes on the last half of St. Mark i. 12; also the first note on the fourth chapter of St. Luke.

"Then,"—that is, immediately before He entered on His public Ministry. "Thus look to be assailed, when thou art about to engage in a special service. Each, according to his place, will find this. When he is upon some purpose honouring God in any particular undertaking or course, and is nearest the performance, then shall the strength of Hell be mustered up against him."

into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil.

"Into the wilderness—to be tempted." There are Temptations therefore in solitude and in the waste. Nay, we learn from this place that solitude is *the fittest scene* for Temptation. Yet men sometimes talk as if in crowded cities also Temptations abounded.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungry

The Almighty Hand, which had till then sustained Him,—as It had before sustained Moses on three several occasions\*, and Elijah, on one†, was then sensibly withdrawn; and the Son of God

\* Deuteronomy ix. 9 and 18: also x. 1 and 10, compared with Exodus xxxiv. 1 and 28.

† 1 Kings xix. 8.

who had assumed the reality of our Human Nature, "hungered." This was necessary; because, not by God *as* God, but by "*The Man Christ Jesus*," must Satan be overcome.

And when the Tempter came to Him, 3

Having probably first assumed the appearance of "an Angel of Light<sup>a</sup>." Observe the malice of Satan,—reserving his most vigorous onset for the hour of fainting, and nature's greatest need!

We shall find that his first Temptation is directed against *carnal appetite*: a circumstance which may convince us of the quarter in which our Nature is most easily, as well as most successfully, assailed. 'The Lust of the flesh' is deemed the readiest avenue of Temptation,—in the case of the second, as in the case of the first, Adam.

he said, If Thou be the SON of GOD, command that these stones be made bread.

By these words, the Arch-Fiend seeks to inspire the same distrust in God,—the same impatient requiring of food<sup>b</sup>,—which the typical Israel displayed during their forty years of trial; when, as it is said, "Lust came upon them in the wilderness, and they tempted God in the desert<sup>c</sup>."

The Tempter says,—If Thou be, in truth, what the Voice from Heaven lately proclaimed Thee to

<sup>a</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 5.

<sup>b</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 19

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Ps. cvi. 14.



be,—namely the promised Son of God and Anointed Deliverer; make proof of Thy character by a display of Thy Almighty power. God humbles Thee in the wilderness,—as “humbled” the people who foreshadowed of old: God suffers Thee to hunger now, as “suffered” them<sup>d</sup>. And yet, He “rained” manna upon *them* for to eat, and gave them from heaven. . . . He rained flesh upon *them* thick as dust. . . . So they did eat and were filled<sup>e</sup>.” Thou art faint, and nigh unto death. Why shouldst *Thou*, more than *they*, be disappointed of Thy lust<sup>f</sup>? *If Thou be* the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread!

There seems nothing monstrous in this proposal. It might be thought also that it could not have been unlawful in Him who giveth food to the flesh;—who, at Cana, commanded the water to be made wine;—and who, on the Eastern shore of the Lake, supplied the necessities of the five thousand of the four thousand;—by a similar exercise of Divine power, to relieve Himself. But the sinfulness of the act, in the present instance, would have consisted in compliance with Satan’s suggestion. And how unlike would have been the circumstances,—how different would have been the object and the consequence,—of our LORD’s compliance! A miracle performed, not in public but in utter privacy: not intended for conviction

<sup>d</sup> Deut. viii. 3.      <sup>e</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 25—30.      <sup>f</sup> Ps. lxxviii.

men, but for gratifying the great Enemy of mankind: not calculated to create in others confidence in God, by supplying support which (in the words of a great writer) "might prove the symbol of better nourishment than Earth could give;" but ending, where it began,—in self. The effect of such compliance on the part of our LORD, would have been only "to suspend and terminate an extraordinary act of devotion, tending to God's glory, and His own perfection."

But He answered and said, It is written, <sup>4</sup> Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Our LORD's reply might have simply been, that compliance was *not His Divine pleasure*. Far different, however, was His reply. He accepts (and thereby discovers to us) the Tempter's allusion to the History of God's chosen people; but calmly appeals, at the same time, to the deep and divine lesson which the great Lawgiver (in Deut. viii. 3) had himself drawn from the occasion when "Man did eat Angels' food<sup>s</sup>." The object of that supernatural supply, whereby the Israelites were fed so long, had been,—to train them to confidence in God as their sole support and satisfying portion;—to rebuke their sensual spirit;—and to furnish a pledge of the security of all God's gracious pro-

<sup>s</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 25.

mises,—an earnest of the blessings which were yet in store, and which awaited them when they should reach their typical Land of Rest. So that, if we may venture to represent so lofty a matter in language of our own, the reply of the Holy One amounted to a declaration that He had meat to eat which the Tempter knew not of,—even the Heavenly aid which did not forsake Him, when all earthly means of sustenance had been withdrawn. His pure mind and will, needed not, like the grosser minds of the Hebrew Fathers, a sign from Heaven. For *His* spiritual support no sensible token was necessary: but, (as Himself said on another occasion), His meat was to do the Father's will, and to finish His work<sup>b</sup>.

See more on this subject, in the note to St. Luke iv. 4.

- 5 Then the Devil taketh Him up into the Holy City, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the Temple,

The *manner* of this mysterious proceeding, is not revealed; but left for the exercise of a reverent curiosity. It seems most likely that a supernatural agency was employed in the second, as in the third Temptation; and that our LORD permitted Himself to be borne by the Adversary through the air. See the note on ver. 8.

Here, then, the scene of conflict is changed.

<sup>b</sup> St. John iv. 34.

It is no longer the Wilderness, but Jerusalem; and Jerusalem retains its name of "The Holy City," though its inhabitants are no longer holy. The appellation is found in Isaiah xlviii. 2, and Daniel ix. 24. It recurs in St. Matthew xxvii. 53.

The "*pinnacle*," here mentioned, may well have been situated on the southern side of the Temple, —which, (according to Josephus, the Jewish Historian,) towering up to a wondrous height, overhung a valley which it was impossible to gaze down upon without giddiness, and risk of falling.

and saith unto Him, If Thou be the SON of God, cast Thyself down :

Much comfort may be derived from the discovered limits of the power of the Evil One. "*Cast Thyself down*," are his words. By which infernal suggestion, the Tempter exposed his weakness rather than proved his power. He has no power to injure, till one shall have first '*Cast one's-self down*.' He can persuade to the act; but he has no power, himself, to achieve it.

for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; and in *their* hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.

It is observable that 'the Father of lies', can yet make appeal to Holy Writ. He quotes Scripture but once; and then, with consummate craft.

The quotation, however specious, is discovered, first, not to be in point: for although the 91st Psalm declares that God will give His Angels charge concerning CHRIST, (and all that are His,)—what encouragement is thereby furnished why He, or any of His servants, should rush headlong on destruction? Moreover, the clause which implies *the condition* of such angelic guardianship, the Arch-fiend craftily omits,—namely, “in all *Thy ways*.” It was none of CHRIST’s ways to cast Himself down from the Temple: nor will the Imitation of CHRIST ever lead His servants into such a perilous path. Lastly, Satan arrests his quotation just in time: for the very next words of the Psalm<sup>1</sup> foretel the victory of the Christian soldier over the Enemy of his Salvation, and over all the Power of the Enemy.

- 7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again,  
Thou shalt not tempt the LORD thy God.

The quotation is from Deuteronomy vi. 16. It was not, of course, addressed by CHRIST to Satan, as if implying that He, *the speaker*, were “the LORD his God,”—(which nevertheless would have been a most true application of the text :) but simply in proof that, *as Man*, He could not lawfully comply with the suggestion of His Adversary. It is therefore such a reply as any one of ourselves, His members, might make at any time; whence

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xci. 13.

its peculiar graciousness and value on the lips of our glorified Head, who hereby teaches us by His example how to encounter temptation in our own person, and in what spirit to overcome the Tempter.

The guilt, then, of tempting God is incurred as often as "we forsake the ordinary path of duty, without obligation or necessity; and thus, without the Word or Providence of God inviting us, become involved in strange difficulties or imminent dangers. In this course," (to use the words of a great man), "no support is to be calculated on from that Power without which we can do nothing."

The Scripture quoted to Satan by our SAVIOUR CHRIST, is full of instruction, as thus applied by Him. Moses spoke the words in question with reference to the distrustful murmuring of the people, whereby they tempted God. But our SAVIOUR, by His present application of them, reminds us that impetuous and unwarrantable presumption on the Divine protection, no less than impatient distrust of His Power, and Love,—is Unbelief; disguised under a more subtle, perhaps, but certainly not under a less dangerous, form. It may *seem* to be Reliance upon God; but, *in reality*, it is Idolatry of Self. To Faith, must be added *Patience*,—the patient waiting for God,—if we would escape the snare which Satan spread no less for the Holy One, when he had "set Him on

a pinnacle of the Temple ;” than for the Israelites when they tempted God at Massah<sup>k</sup>. And this is perhaps, the reason of the remarkable prominence given to the grace of *Patience*, both by our Lord and His Apostles<sup>l</sup>; a circumstance, as it may be thought, which has not altogether attracted the attention which it deserves.

- 8 Again, the Devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ;

It is impossible to say *what* Mountain was the scene of this, the Third Temptation. But since there is no Mountain in the world which commands such a spectacle which is here indicated, (neither, indeed, *can* be,) we may rest well assured that it was by some subtle device of him who is elsewhere styled “the Prince of the Power of the Air<sup>m</sup>,” that “all the kingdoms of the World, and *the glory* of them,” were made to display themselves in dazzling order before the human eyes of the second Adam. This becomes plainer from

<sup>k</sup> Deut. vi. 16, &c.

<sup>l</sup> St. Luke xxi. 19. Rom. ii. 7: v. 3, 4: viii. 25: xii. 12: xv. 4, 5: 2 Cor. vi. 4: xii. 12. Coloss. i. 11. 1 Thess. i. 3: v. 14. 2 Thess. i. 4: iii. 5. 1 Tim. iii. 3: vi. 11. 2 Tim. ii. 24: iii. 10. Titus ii. 2. Hebr. vi. 12: x. 36: xii. 1. St. James i. 3, 4: v. 7, 8, 10, 11: 1 Pet. ii. 20: 2 Peter i. 6: Rev. i. 9: ii. 2, 3, 19: iii. 10: xiii. 10: xiv. 12.

<sup>m</sup> Ephes. ii. 2.

St. Luke's account of the same transaction,—iv. 5; where see the note.

and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.

The remark which was made on ver. 6, here again presents itself. Notwithstanding this boastful speech of the Enemy, it is evident that the *surrender of the will* is needful before he can proceed a single step with his infernal purpose. The Devil cannot give riches to whom he will: but to those only who are willing to receive them of him.

Far higher consolation, however, is contained in this place of Scripture. Many holy men have been thrown into dismay and perplexity by the blasphemous thoughts with which they have been occasionally tormented. Let all such take comfort in the discovery that Satan here suggests foul blasphemy to their Incarnate LORD. He knew Him not, for certain, to be God, indeed; but he already suspected no less: and that he had to do with one of wondrous spiritual attainment,—a most holy person,—he had at least discovered. Yet did Satan dare to suggest to *Him* no less a sin than devil-worship!

Then saith JESUS unto him, Get thee hence Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt



worship the LORD thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

The Captain of our Salvation is found to answer every suggestion of the Enemy by a single sentence of THE LAW,—as contained in the Book of Deuteronomy: viz., viii. 3: vi. 16: vi. 13. These were His “smooth stones out of the brook<sup>1</sup>.” He condescends not to His Adversary,—no, not even to point out the hollowness of each proposal; but pierces him at once with the ‘sharp two-edged sword which goeth out of His mouth’;—‘the sword of the SPIRIT, which is the Word of GOD<sup>2</sup>.’

- 11 Then the Devil leaveth Him, and, behold, Angels came and ministered unto Him.

The Tempter,—baffled in every endeavour,—withdraws in wonder: and, oh blessed contrast! behold Angels are hastening to minister to the mysterious necessity of the Son of Man.

Leighton says beautifully,—“This know, that our LORD is tender of us, and will inlay our painful conflicts with sweet comforts. And these, in a high degree, usually follow hard encounters patiently and stoutly sustained. Our LORD had a cordial draught both before and after this conflict: before,—in the last verse of chap. iii.,—He

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xvii. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 16 and xix. 15, 21. Compare 2 Thessa. ii. 8: Rev. ii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ephes. vi. 17. Compare Hebrews iv. 12.

was confirmed in the very point He was assaulted  
 1: 'This is My Beloved Son.' And as He was  
 confirmed before, so was He comforted after:  
 Angels came, and ministered unto Him.' Oh!  
 the sweet issue our LORD gives to many a sad  
 battle of weak Christians, wherein they possibly  
 thought once that all was lost, and that they  
 never should hold out, and come through it! But  
 never think so. We shall come through all, and  
 the day shall be ours."

Now when JESUS had heard that John 12  
 was cast into prison, He departed into  
 Galilee;

Between the last verse<sup>1</sup>, and the present, if you  
 would know what happened, read St. John's Gospel  
 from the 19th verse of chapter i. to the 43rd verse  
 of chapter iv.

The Imprisonment of John is thus distinctly  
 noticed by all the four Evangelists (St. Matt. iv. 12,  
 —St. Mark i. 14,—St. Luke iv. 14,—St. John iv. 43,) in  
 order, with the greater clearness, to mark the be-  
 ginning of our LORD's Ministry. He had already  
 wrought miracles, and made disciples; but it is  
 from *this* event that His public career more espe-  
 cially dates. See ver. 17, and the note there.  
 Notice also what St. Peter says, in Acts x. 37.

Concerning the circumstances which led to  
 John's imprisonment by Herod the Tetrarch, see

<sup>1</sup> ver. 11.

the note on St. Mark vi. 17. The event itself is related by the present Evangelist, in chap. xiv. 3, 4.

No remark, however, will be found,—either there or elsewhere,—on the extremely short duration of the Baptist's Ministry; to which, in the infinite Wisdom of God, the space of *one year*, at the utmost, was assigned. Nor, indeed, is it *the manner* of the SPIRIT so to convey instruction. The facts are given; or the facts may, by careful study, be found out. To draw inferences from them, is almost always left to individual hearts. Let us not, from this place of Scripture, for instance, fail to derive two important lessons: *first*,—an intimation of the mighty result which *may* be achieved in a very small space of time: *next*,—a hint that there is no knowing how soon God may have done with us; and that it is quite a mistake to covet for ourselves, or for others, a prolonged life,—on the supposition that we might thereby be able to serve God effectually for a longer time. He does not *require* our services, at all. He certainly does not take us *out* of the World, till He has no more work left for us to do *in* it. “Let all rather study for themselves, and wish unto others, that they may be diligent in their work while their day lasts, be it short or long; faithful and fruitful in their generation; and the shorter their day is like to be, work the faster. For, certainly, the good of life is not in

he *length* of it; but in the *use* of it."—They are the words of Archbishop Leighton.

And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt 13  
in Capernaum.

When the Forerunner's Imprisonment was announced to our LORD, He was staying for two days at Sychar in Samaria<sup>r</sup>. Thereupon, He departed into Galilee,—taking Nazareth, "where He had been brought up<sup>s</sup>," in His way. For the account of what then occurred, see St. Luke's Gospel,—iv. 16—30. "Leaving Nazareth,"—"not being honoured in His own Country. So, commonness of things makes them cheap with us, how excellent soever;"—"He came and dwelt in Capernaum."

The town stood near the North-Western extremity of the Lake of Tiberias, or (as it is oftener called) the *Sea* of Galilee; but there exist no remains of it, and its very site is uncertain.

Our SAVIOUR came to dwell by the sea-side, in order to fish for men.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken 14  
by Esaias the prophet,

Not till *now*, therefore, was the veil removed from this place of ancient Prophecy. Yet how mysterious was the fulfilment of what had been here foretold! A forlorn Stranger,—a houseless Wan-

<sup>r</sup> St. John iv. 5 and 43.

<sup>s</sup> See St. Matt. ii. 23; St. Luke iv. 16 and St. Mark i. 9.

derer,—a poor, persecuted Man: yet, *this was* the “great Light!” *This* was He who was to “make glorious” the land of Zabulon and the land of Naphtali!

Such discoveries become lessons and warnings to ourselves. Not only with reference to unfulfilled prophecy, are they in the highest degree suggestive: but they surely invite also to a more watchful study of incidents altogether private and personal. Promises of Divine Help, duly fulfilled, but fulfilled in a shape under which they fail to strike us;—offers of Mercy,—opportunities of Blessing,—the very presence of our LORD,—all duly vouchsafed to us; yet, it may be, all despised, neglected, over-looked:—and that, because we have not the ears to hear, or the hearts to discover, or the eyes to recognise Him when we see Him!

- 15 saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land  
of Nephtalim, *by* the way of the sea, beyond  
16 Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people  
which sat in darkness saw great light; and  
to them which sat in the region and shadow  
of death light is sprung up.

The finger of Prophecy had not failed to point out the spot where MESSIAH was to dwell so long, and work so many wonders. The place of Isaiah here quoted, is found in chap. ix. 1—2.

Divinely indeed did it happen that, in “the

orders of Zabulon and Nephthalim,"—(the spot, namely, where the territory respectively assigned to those patriarchs<sup>†</sup>, met,)—the SAVIOUR of His people should have come to dwell: for it was precisely the inhabitants of *this* district, who, first of all the Jews, were led into Captivity by Tiglath Pileser, King of Assyria, B. C. 740; as related in the Second Book of Kings<sup>‡</sup>. So that, as one of the ancients points out,—“where the Law was first forgotten, *there* the Gospel was first preached.” The Region which had been the first to suffer Captivity, was the first to enjoy the Light of that Truth which maketh “free<sup>§</sup>.”

The prophecy of Isaiah here quoted, contains a special allusion to the Assyrian Captivity; for,—contrasting the fate of the region here spoken of, in the days of Messiah, with its former desolate condition,—the Prophet is thought by learned men to have written somewhat as follows:—“Nevertheless, there shall not hereafter be darkness in the Land which was distressed. In the former time, He debased the land of Zabulon, and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time He hath made it glorious: even the way of the Sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Nations.” And then follows,—“The people which walked in darkness have seen a great Light,” &c.

<sup>†</sup> Joshua xix. 10 to 16: 32 to 39.

<sup>‡</sup> xv. 29: and see 1 Chron. v. 26.

<sup>§</sup> St. John viii. 32, 36.

<sup>¶</sup> Compare this with the rendering of Isaiah ix. 1, 2, in the authorised version of the English Bible.

The Northern part of Galilee was called "*Galilee of the Gentiles*" because it bordered upon a heathen land, and was itself partly heathen. "Twenty cities" of Galilee had been given by Solomon to Hiram, king of Tyre\*. Well, therefore, might such a people be said to "*sit in darkness*;" as not knowing which way they should go.

The constancy of the Imagery employed by the HOLY SPIRIT, cannot fail to strike every one who is at all familiar with the Gospels. Consider, in connexion with the appellation in the text, such places as the following:—St. John i. 5 to 9: iii. 19 to 21: viii. 12: ix. 5: xi. 9, 10: xii. 35, 36, and 46.

# 17 From that time JESUS began to preach,

That is to say, from the time that John was cast into prison,—which was the occasion of our SAVIOUR's departure into Galilee, spoken of in ver. 12.

and to say, Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

This had been the Sermon of the Baptist, also. See chap. iii. 2, and the note there. "Not only the same sense, but the very same words. He who needed to borrow from none, but gives all to all, yet disdains not to preach this over after John Baptist."

\* 1 Kings ix. 11.

"Oh, sweet invitation,—the offer of pardon to a repenting sinner! But how much more that of a Kingdom! He might have said, 'Repent, for the Prison of Hell is at hand,' if ye do not: but He rather draws by the happiness and glory attending our return." So far, pious Leighton.

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, 18

For some account of this Lake, see the note on St. Mark i. 16.

saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea :

To read this, no one would suppose that Simon and Andrew were well known to the SAVIOUR, and had already become His Disciples: but it is the manner of the Evangelists when they mention a person or place for the first time, to introduce the name in this manner. Observe how Nazareth,—for thirty years CHRIST's home,—is mentioned by St. Matthew, in chap. ii. 23.

Very surprising indeed will the ensuing brief narrative appear, to one who reads it with the first chapter of St. John's Gospel<sup>a</sup> fresh in his memory. The comparison of the two histories leads to many an important inference concerning our SAVIOUR's method with His Disciples. There was no constraint put upon their wills or affec-

<sup>a</sup> ver. 35 to 42.



tions. To "abide with Him<sup>b</sup>," might, *o* not, avail to draw the heart effectually *to* The very witnessing of a Miracle, (like *the* formed at Cana of Galilee<sup>c</sup>,) was not eno<sup>1</sup> produce, even in faithful men, the kind o<sup>1</sup> viction we are apt to suppose. God left *th* themselves. The seed of His spoken Word as in the parable,—by the way-side, or upon places, or among thorns, or into good g<sup>1</sup> and it met with a corresponding fate<sup>d</sup>. nearly does *our* position resemble *theirs*! closely does the reception which CHRIS meets with in the World, resemble that awaited Him "all the time that He went out among" men<sup>e</sup>!

These men, from being Disciples of Jo Baptist, had transferred their obedience to C The remarks just now offered are meant to how it may have happened that when they the Baptist thrown into prison, they resume former calling.

for they were fishers.

Let us pause for a moment on this sh<sup>1</sup> tence; which declares, by the way, the te estate, and lowly calling of the first Apostl

It was the will of God to choose the n whose means He intended to remodel the

<sup>b</sup> St. John i. 39.

<sup>d</sup> St. Matthew xiii. 3 to 8.

<sup>c</sup> St. Joh

<sup>e</sup> Acts i.

the humbler class; that so, no flesh might in His presence<sup>f</sup>; nor any pretend that an wit had a share in the miraculous leavening process which ensued. It was God, throughout; acting in, and through, most weak instruments.

But it can scarcely require to be stated that no encouragement whatever is thereby given to the rashness of unlearned men of low degree,—thrusting themselves forward, in the vain pretence that they are as the Apostles were; and presuming to usurp the seat of the learned, because (forsooth) it pleased God once to “choose the foolish things of the World to confound the wise; and the weak things of the World to confound the things which are mighty<sup>g</sup>.” If the fishermen of Galilee taught all mysteries, it was, because in the place of mere Human wisdom, they enjoyed the extraordinary illumination of God's HOLY SPIRIT. They were miraculously enabled to speak with new tongues; and, for the subject of their discourse, it was not they who spoke, but the SPIRIT, within them, which gave them utterance<sup>h</sup>. When God consents to become our Teacher, and to work Miracles in our behalf, human helps may be neglected; but, *not till then*.

In the mean time, let it be carefully noted that God made choice of His Holy Apostles by no ir-respective decree. Great indeed was the Faith, great the Zeal, marvellous must have been the

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. i. 29.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. i. 27.

<sup>h</sup> Acts ii. 4.

Goodness to which those men had attained, who were destined hereafter to "sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel<sup>1</sup>." They did not become Saints *because* they were Apostles. On the contrary. Our SAVIOUR *made* them Apostles because they had become Saints. See the note on St. John i. 43, 44. In their personal sanctity, let all seek to resemble and to rival them. Their ministerial rights and privileges, let those who have not been duly called, agree to behold from a distance and to revere.

And, humble as were the instruments which God employed for the Salvation of Mankind, the humbling was the Doctrine which He proposed to men's acceptance. See 1 Cor. i. 18, and 22 to 23. The result might have been expected, namely, that "the poor *in spirit*," alone,—who, in this case, were also "the *poor*," as St. Paul expressly informs us<sup>k</sup>,—embraced the Kingdom.

## 19 And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.

It was a Divine circumstance that these great Apostles should have been of the number of those who "go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters<sup>1</sup>:" for, to cast the net of the Kingdom<sup>m</sup>,—to fish for souls,—and to capture mighty draughts of men,—("Casting the

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xix. 28.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cvii. 23.

<sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. i. 26.

<sup>m</sup> St. Matt. xiii. 47.

not in public preaching, and angling in private converse,")—became their wondrous calling. Yet, how little must they have understood of the wondrous prophecy now delivered by Him, who "declareth the end from the beginning; and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done!"

The Psalm just quoted proceeds, as if in a prophetic strain,—“These men see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep.”—A great “work,” and a mighty “wonder,” truly, had now been wrought: for, unlikely as it may sound, this piece of narrative is certainly the same with *that* in St. Luke v. 1 to 11. The first Miraculous Draught of fishes, therefore, was the event which produced an abiding conviction in the minds of these four followers of the LAMB; proved the occasion of that prevailing summons to follow CHRIST, which drew after Him those two wondrous pairs of brethren,—the sons of Jonas, and the sons of Zebedee.

You will observe that this miracle was, in effect, an appeal to their *Faith*. They looked to capture *something* in their nets: but their success far surpassed the utmost limit of their hopes.

And they straightway left *their* nets, and 20 followed Him.

St. Peter alluded to this hour, when he asked our LORD, long after,—“Behold, we have forsaken

<sup>a</sup> Isaiah xlii. 10.

all, and followed Thee: what shall we have thence?<sup>o</sup>”

21 And going on from thence, He saw of two brethren,

Observe how they are gathered, by two and two, into the Ark: even as, by two and two, CHRIST will hereafter send them forth to preach.

These are *Brothers*; that so Nature may conspire with Grace in securing a firm foundation of Love for the edifice which is to follow. Anciently, God builded on Moses and Aaron; now, He builds on Peter and Andrew,—and John.

James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets:

They were “mending” the nets which—Luke<sup>a</sup> specially informs us,—had been “broken” by the multitude of the Fishes, which they had recently caught.

and he called them.

It will be perceived that, notwithstanding the conciseness of the narrative, mention has been made of the particular act in which the disciples were engaged at the time of their calling; rather, that this is the only thing which is

<sup>o</sup> St. Matthew xix. 27.      <sup>p</sup> Exodus iv. 14, 15, and 21

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke v. 6.

## ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

ed. Two of them were casting a net into the  
;—and two, were occupied in the manner just  
described.

Consider how carefully, in the case of many  
of God's chosen servants, we find their oc-  
casion recorded, at the moment when the Di-  
summons first found them out. "The LORD  
me," says the prophet Amos, "as I followed  
flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, pro-  
y unto My people Israel<sup>a</sup>." Such was the  
pation of Moses<sup>t</sup> and of David<sup>u</sup>. Gideon was  
shing wheat<sup>x</sup>; Saul, seeking the asses of his  
er<sup>v</sup>; and Elisha, ploughing with twelve yoke  
xen<sup>z</sup>.—Nathanael, beneath the fig-tree<sup>a</sup>; St.  
threw sitting at the Receipt of custom<sup>b</sup>; and  
, journeying to Damascus<sup>c</sup>;—are examples of  
same thing, in the New Testament: to which  
may add the case of four other Apostles,—  
Peter and St. Andrew, St. James and St. John.  
ow are we hereby reminded that CHRIST is  
to be met with, in the path of duty! that no  
pation is so secular, or so lowly, as to exclude  
from the blessing of being found out, in the  
it of it, by Him!

and they immediately left the ship and 22  
r Father, and followed Him.

see above, ver. 18.

<sup>a</sup> Amos vii. 15.

<sup>t</sup> Exod. iii. 1.

<sup>u</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 70—71.

<sup>x</sup> Judges vi. 11.

<sup>v</sup> Sam. ix. 3 to 20.

<sup>z</sup> 1 Kings xix. 19.

<sup>a</sup> St. John i. 48.

<sup>b</sup> St. Matthew ix. 9, &c.

<sup>c</sup> Acts ix. 3, &c.

## A PLAIN COMMENTARY

Simon and Andrew forsook property,—and John overlooked earthly ties,—for C's sake, and the Gospel's. Absolutely, they appear not to have forsaken much: but *all they possessed*; and therefore, it was them.

Henceforth, the waves of this trou World,—the Ark of CHRIST's Church,—of the Gospel,—men's wandering wills;—came the objects to which these holy men referred all their anxieties.

23 And JESUS went about all Galilee ing in their synagogues, and preach Gospel of the Kingdom, and heal manner of sickness, and all manner ease among the people.

This is the description of our LORD's First Ministerial Journey, during which He visited all Galilee. What a mighty narrative summed up in a few words! The laborious and hardship, and weariness of many months, the splendour of many hundred discourses public and private;—stupendous acts of countless miracles of Love:—all, are dispatched in fewer words than we should for the description of some of our most actions.

Another circuit of Galilee, like the present, may be found noticed, and almost in the same

chap. ix. 35. On both occasions, spiritual infirmity and bodily ailment are spoken of in such close connexion, that it is impossible not to perceive the relation which is intimated as subsisting between them: the latter, a type or emblem of the former;—the latter, no less than the former, consequence of the Fall: both alike, symptoms of that great and general disorder, for the remedy of which the Son of Man had come into the world. Consider the language of St. Matthew viii. 16, 17. Moreover, the Miracles which He wrought were a pledge of His power; and therefore a confirmation of the Doctrines which He came to deliver.

And His fame went throughout all Syria: 24 and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them.

As might be expected, the fame of the Great Physician spreads far beyond the region actually traversed by Him. "Syria" denotes all the region situated to the North of the Country in which our Lord was at present preaching.

And there followed Him great multitudes 25 of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis,



and *from* Jerusalem, and *from* Judea, and *from* beyond Jordan.

So mighty a retinue was drawn after His blessed footsteps in consequence of His miraculous act. "Decapolis,"—a word denoting *Ten Cities*, (of which Gadara was one,)—was the name of the district East of the Sea of Galilee<sup>d</sup>. The present enumeration therefore amounts to a statement that the SAVIOUR, in the course of His first Ministerial Journey, was followed by multitudes from the Country on either side of the Jordan, as well as from the Capital City.

## The Prayer.

O LORD, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; Give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to Thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, one GOD, world without end. Amen.

<sup>d</sup> St. Luke viii. 26

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FIFTH CHAPTER OF

## St. Matthew's Gospel.

1. CHRIST beginneth *His sermon in the mount* : 3 *declaring who are blessed*, 13 *who are the salt of the earth*, 14 *the light of the world, the city on an hill*, 15 *the candle* : 17 *that He came to fulfil the law*. 21 *What it is to kill*, 27 *to commit adultery*, 33 *to swear* 38 *exhorteth to suffer wrong*, 44 *to love even our enemies*, 48 *and to labour after perfectness*.

7. AND seeing the multitudes, He went up  
 a mountain : and when He was set, His  
 iples came unto Him : and He opened 2  
 mouth, and taught them, saying,

he "Sermon on the Mount,"—for by *that*  
 e the first and the fullest of our LORD's public  
 urses is known,—begins at this place. As the  
 Law, promulgated by Moses, had been ori-  
 ally delivered on a mountain, (that is, Sinai;)   
 as it proper that on a mountain also, the New  
 should be delivered by CHRIST. But the  
 rast of the circumstances is remarkable. The  
 was given *then*, amid terrors; *now*, amid  
 1. *Then*, God spake to His people by the hand  
 loses; *now*, face to face.

### 3 Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for the Kingdom of Heaven.

It seems a beautiful circumstance, that where the volume of the Old Testament ends by threatening a *Curse*, the Gospel of the Kingdom should begin with the promise of a *Blessing*.

Observe, that the first of these eight 'Beatitudes' (as they are called,) is a blessing pronounced on that state of heart which, conscious of inward, not outward, poverty and need, knows its own utter destitution. So that the promise runs parallel with that other promise of our Divine Master, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted<sup>a</sup>." Our Lord points out Pride,—spiritual Pride,—as the root and source of all evil. For He speaks not here of a mere absence of this world's goods; but of that state of heart which worldly poverty is often found to maintain, or to produce. Hence, St. Luke was guided to record this first Beatitude in different language:—"Blessed be the poor: for yours is the Kingdom of God." See the note on St. Luke vi. 20.

Observe, therefore, that what God regards as the inclination of *the heart*,—the disposition of *the will*. A very beggar may yet be full of proud thoughts: or if, through misery, his soul be humbled, yet may he be for ever pining after that which, if obtained, would infallibly inflate him.

<sup>a</sup> St. Matt. xxiii. 12; St. Luke xiv. 11, and xviii. 14.

Now, such an one comes not, cannot come, within the terms of the blessedness here promised.

Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they <sup>4</sup> shall be comforted.

The mourning, here spoken of, is not, of course, mere worldly grief: (for "the sorrow of the world," as the Apostle declares, "worketh *death*<sup>b</sup>":) but it is *that* affliction, *that* "godly sorrow," which is sure, sooner or later, to overtake every man who faithfully endeavours to walk in the way of God's commandments. It is a sad, but a true prophecy,—"Yea, and all that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS, shall suffer persecution<sup>c</sup>." Those who mourn after such a sort, have the promise of "the Comforter, which is the HOLY GHOST<sup>d</sup>."

Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall in- <sup>5</sup> herit the earth.

Our SAVIOUR here quotes the words of Psalm xxxviii. 11. That wondrous promise seems to involve a contradiction: for surely, (we say,) the meek are apt rather to be thrust out, and driven away, from their possessions. Nevertheless, the thing which is here promised will infallibly be found to come to pass; for He is faithful that promiseth. The meek shall possess the earth, even *by right*; for it is said—"they shall *inherit*" it.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 10.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 12, and compare St. John xvi. 33, Acts xiv. 22, &c.

<sup>d</sup> St. John xiv. 26. Compare 2 Cor. i. 4; also St. Luke xvi. 25, and Rev. vii. 14.

Only, let those who earnestly desire this blessing,—as many as desire to possess the earth,—be ware lest they become *possessed by it*. For, in its fullest sense, this promise doubtless has reference to those “*new Heavens*,” and that “*new Earth*,” of which St. Peter speaks\*, and for which the Saints of God are ever looking.

- 6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

The keenness of bodily appetite,—of Hunger and of Thirst,—was given us, in order that we might know how ardent should be the craving of our Souls after Holiness. This spiritual craving the Psalmist felt, when he cried,—“As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God<sup>f</sup>.” Now it is here promised, among many other things, that this deep longing of the Saints,—alluded to, rather than described,—shall be fully satisfied in Heaven. “They shall hunger no more,” (as it is said,) “neither thirst any more<sup>g</sup>. . . . For the LAMB which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. And” (it is added) “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes<sup>h</sup>:” words which recal the form of the second and fourth of

\* 2 Pet. iii. 13.

<sup>f</sup> Ps. xlii. 1.

<sup>g</sup> Rev. vii. 16. Compare Isaiah xlix. 10.

<sup>h</sup> Rev. vii. 17. Compare Rev. xxi. 4, and Isaiah xxv. 8.

these Beatitudes, as St. Luke exhibits them:—  
 "Blessed are ye that *hunger* now, for ye shall be  
 filled. Blessed are ye that *weep* now, for ye shall  
 laugh!"

Not only, however, in the World to come, but  
 in this World also, will the soul's desire be satisfied:  
*fully* there; *here*, only imperfectly and in part:—  
 but the longings, with which it dilates itself *here*,  
 render it capable of the greater fulness *hereafter*.  
 And we know that the flesh being subdued to the  
 Spirit, is apter for righteousness and true ho-  
 line<sup>s</sup>: by which remark it is intended to con-  
 nect these words of Scripture with the parallel  
 place in St. Luke's Gospel,—vi. 21.

Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall  
 obtain mercy.

Thus, God pledges Himself to the bestowal of  
 His Divine mercies,—which are eternal, and  
 beyond price; on the condition that we show  
 mercy in human things,—which are brief and  
 valueless.

How often is this condition of future blessed-  
 ness insisted upon in the Gospel! Consider St.  
 Matt. vi. 12, 14, 15: xviii. 21—35, especially the  
 last verse. St. Mark xi. 25, 26, &c.

Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they  
 shall see God.

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke vi. 21.

<sup>2</sup> See the Collect for the First Sunday in Lent.

"The pure *in heart*:" for, so that purity be *there*, the lips and the hands,—yea, the whole life, (like waters flowing from the fountain-head,) will perforce be pure.

The vision of God is made dependent in many places of Scripture besides this, on holiness of character; or, as it is here said, on purity of heart. "Follow peace with all men," says St. Paul, "and holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord*!" "He that hath clean hands, and a *pure heart*," shall hereafter "ascend into the hill of the Lord," and like the highest order of the holy Angels, "see the King in His beauty°."

But the beloved Disciple in a certain place<sup>1</sup>, even more strikingly says,—“We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, *for* we shall see Him as He is:”—thus making a restoration to the Divine image<sup>2</sup>, and the seeing of God, dependent notions. And so, without pretending to solve the hard question of *how* this mysterious promise is to be fulfilled, (for who can tell what a glorious heritage of loftier powers may be reserved for the Spiritual Body<sup>3</sup>?) let us be sure that like every other divine prophecy, it *will have* its own wondrous fulfilment,—partially, in this world; more fully, in the next:

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 14.    <sup>m</sup> Ps. xxiv. 4.    <sup>n</sup> St. Matt. xviii. 10.

<sup>o</sup> Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

<sup>p</sup> 1 St. John iii. 2.

<sup>q</sup> See Genesis i. 26; and compare Psalm xvii. 15.

<sup>r</sup> Consider the following texts, Job xix. 26, 27; 1 Cor. ii. 9; (quoted from Isaiah lxiv. 4;) St. Matt. xxii. 30.

*here*, "as through a glass darkly;" *there*, "face to face". We may be certain, moreover, that this is a matter concerning which he who leads the holiest life, will *know the most*.

It has been thought that there is something progressive in the blessings here enumerated, one rising above another: and doubtless they follow, (like the stars of Heaven,) in a beautiful and wonderful order, though it may be difficult, always, to find it out. This Beatitude and the last stand together instructively. How lovely a character would his be, who should add to his "mercifulness," (not a very rare grace, it may be thought,) "purity of heart,"—which is perhaps the very rarest grace of all!

Blessed *are* the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"The peace-makers,"—whether those who undertake the blessed office of reconciling brethren at enmity; or those less conspicuous ones who are engaged in overcoming their own warring lusts and affections,—making peace in their own hearts,—and setting up the Kingdom of God within themselves<sup>1</sup>. The first work avails little without the second.

You observe that this Sabbath of the Soul stands in the *seventh* place.

To produce "on earth, Peace," was the great office of the Gospel,—whose Author is called "the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xvii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke ii. 14.



Prince of Peace<sup>1</sup>." To peace-makers is here assigned as their peculiar blessedness, *the likeness of God*.

- 10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Persecuted—*for righteousness' sake*;" else, no prospect of blessedness is held out.

The eighth Beatitude has the same promise attached to it as the first,—see ver. 3. The first and eighth Beatitudes, therefore, are like the corresponding clasps at the two extremities of a chain,—where every bead is a blessing.

But, in truth, "the Kingdom of Heaven" is the one reward promised in every instance; although under various names, according to the various Graces specified. Just as it is the character of *the Just*,—though viewed under different aspects,—to which the promises are all alike addressed.

- 11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner  
12 of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.

"Revile you," to your face: "say all manner of evil against you," behind your back: "persecute

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah ix. 6. Compare Ephesians ii. 14. St. John xiv. 27, &c.

u," in any way. But all this must be done *selfy*,—and *for CHRIST's sake*, in order to bring within the terms of the blessing.

"The prophets which were before you;"—by which saying, CHRIST associates the humblest of his suffering servants with that "goodly fellowship of the Prophets" "of whom the World was not worthy."

Ye are the salt of the earth :

13

The Saints are declared to be that which keeps this old Earth of ours from corruption. Their blessed office is to be to mankind "the savour of life unto life." . . . The transition is more obvious in St. Luke's Gospel. There, the preceding exhortations are *addressed to* the Disciples, "Blessed be ye:" whence it follows, in this place, "Ye are the salt of the earth."

but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

That is,—Beware lest you *lose* this property of sustaining the World's life! "For it is impossible," (as the great Apostle declares,) "for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, and have tasted the good Word of

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews ix. 32—38.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 16.

God, and the powers of the World to come, if *they* shall fall away, to renew *them* again to repentance<sup>a</sup>." With what salt shall *they* be salted, to whom was committed the World's salting?

- 14 Ye are the light of the world. A city  
15 that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

As "salt," in ver. 13, was descriptive of the *inward* condition, so "light," in this place, has reference to the *outward* aspect. The Church of CHRIST,—like the faithful witness in Heaven<sup>b</sup>,—shines with borrowed glory: glory derived from "the Sun of Righteousness<sup>c</sup>," who styles Himself, "the Light of the World<sup>d</sup>." Being set on an hill, (the "holy Hill of Sion,") the Church neither can, nor should, escape observation. It is as absurd to suppose that a man would first light a candle, and then seek to smother its beams under a bushel, or to suppose that the Divine Author of our Faith should intend those whom He entrusts with the Light of His Gospel to sit down in the shadow of bodily ease and self-indulgence, and thus to conceal the glory of their trust.

- 16 Let your light so shine before men, that

<sup>a</sup> Hebrews vi. 4—6.

<sup>b</sup> Psalm lxxxix. 37.

<sup>c</sup> Malachi iv. 2.

<sup>d</sup> St. John viii. 12; ix. 5; xii. 35, &c.

they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

*Why* should men "see our good works?" Not certainly in order to promote conceit, and a spirit of self-righteousness, in order to glorify *us*; but only, in order that the sight of those Works may induce beholders *to glorify our Father which is in Heaven*. It is GOD who is glorified in His Saints.

Think not that I am come to destroy the 17 law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Our Saviour fulfilled *the Law* when He submitted to all its precepts;—*the Prophets*, when He either performed or endured whatever things they had foretold concerning Himself; *both* "the Law and the Prophets," by His life-long acts of Love\*. But the present declaration was true in another, and even a more striking sense; for we know that all things which, under the Law, had been imperfectly conveyed by type or shadow, exhibited their true intent, and discovered their full meaning, only under the Gospel dispensation. The very history of GOD's ancient people, seen by the light of CHRIST's words, or those of His holy Apostles, is proved to be replete with unsuspected teaching; and may be truly said to have been only then "fulfilled" when CHRIST came into the World.

\* St. Matt. vii. 12.

- 18 For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

By this mention of "one jot or tittle," we are reminded of the dignity and importance which attaches to the very least letter of God's written Law. So solemn a declaration should convince the most reluctant heart, how utterly baseless must be the pretence that the teaching of the New Testament casts any slight whatever upon the teaching of the Old: or that Christianity is in any respect contradictory of the Jewish Religion. "Remember ye *the Law of Moses* My servant,"—are among the latest words of the Prophet Malachi, iv. 4: and yet the first words of the Gospel were already on his lips<sup>1</sup>. But the veil which at first covered so much of Divine meaning, was afterwards lifted off and withdrawn.

- 19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

That is,—So far am I from annulling the ancient Law of My people, that I declare I will

<sup>1</sup> See Malachi iv. 5, 6. Compare also iii. 1, and St. Mark i. 1, 2.

lightly esteem the man who assumes to himself the liberty of violating the least precept of that Law,—and so sets an example of disobedience. Whereas, the most strict obedience shall enjoy the most high reward.

For I say unto you, That except your 20 righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The same train of thought is continued:—For I say unto you that your righteousness, although resembling *in kind* that of the Scribes and Pharisees, unless it infinitely surpasses theirs *in degree*, will not avail to win for you even an entrance into My Kingdom.

We are next,—in verses 21 to 26,—presented with a specimen of Divine Interpretation of that Law which, in its true spirit and intention, our Saviour professes that He came “not to destroy.” The Commandment first noticed, is the sixth; which, He who gave it so interprets as to show that in that negative precept, (“Thou shalt do no Murder,”) is contained the Law of Love. And this, perhaps, is the reason why our Blessed LORD begins with that particular commandment; instead of the fifth, for example: for “Love is the fulfilling of the Law.”

\* See Romans xiii. 8—10. Compare also Galatians v. 14; St. Matt. vii. 12, and xxii. 39, 40; 1 Timothy i. 5; Coloss. iii. 14; St. James ii. 8.

be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Not, observe,—“If thou hast aught against thy brother;” but, “*If thy brother hath aught against thee:*” which certainly is a great guarantee that there shall be reconciliation.

On the other hand, his “having somewhat *against thee*,” is probably a sign that *thou wert* the offender. Had *he* been the offender, there would be no need that thou shouldst leave thy gift, and go thy way. A mere act of forgiveness would have been all that was required. Still, he may have been the author of the wrong, and the bearer of malice both. Any way, there must be reconciliation.

Compare with this, the exhortation before Holy Communion, to be “in perfect charity with all men,”—in order to be “meet partakers of those holy mysteries.” For “we have an altar,” (as St. Paul says<sup>1</sup>,) and thereto we bring our gift,—even as the Jews were taught to do.

- 25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and  
26 thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews xiii. 10.

ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

ice, till thou hast paid the uttermost  
thing.

These are two very difficult verses; but after  
has gone before, their general purport is  
. It is still reconciliation, which is recom-  
ended; still, the law of Love, which is enforced;  
as it seems, by a most awful threat: for how  
'the uttermost farthing' *ever* be paid?

Whiles thou art in the way with him," must  
te the days of the years of our mortal pil-  
age. "The Judge," and "the Officer," and  
son,"—are terms, borrowed from the usage  
man courts, which seem descriptive of what  
be hereafter; if death should find a man un-  
ciled to the adversary, who is prepared to  
against him before the Judgment-seat of

ur attention is directed, next, to the require-  
s of the ALMIGHTY in the seventh Com-  
lment.

e have heard that it was said by them 27  
d time, Thou shalt not commit adul-  
: but I say unto you, That whosoever 28  
eth on a woman to lust after her hath  
nitted adultery with her already in his  
t.

as for God, His way is perfect<sup>k</sup>." "Every

<sup>k</sup> 2 Sam. xxii. 31; Psalm xviii. 30.



- 31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement :

Alluding to Deut. xxiv. 1,—a permission which, as our LORD tells us in another place<sup>q</sup>, Moses gave the people “because of the hardness of their hearts.” This permission had come to be monstrously abused in our SAVIOUR’S time; so that, on any petty pretext, a man thought himself at liberty to put away his wife.

- 32 But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

The solemn truth is implied, that the woman, so put away, continues to be the wife of him who put her away: for God on<sup>e</sup> joined them together. “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh<sup>r</sup>.”

- 33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths :

Our LORD proceeds to the eighth Commandment. To “forswear,” in this place, is to fail in

<sup>q</sup> St. Matt. xix. 8.

<sup>r</sup> St. Matt. xix. 6.





JERUSALEM IS THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING.

he performance of something sworn. The very words do not occur in the Law of Moses; but the command is found in Deut. xxxiii. 21, and 23: Numbers xxx. 2.

But I say unto you, Swear not at all; 34  
neither by Heaven; for it is God's throne:  
nor by the Earth; for it is His footstool: 35  
neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of  
the great King. Neither shalt thou swear 36  
by thy head, because thou canst not make  
one hair white or black. But let your com- 37  
munication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for  
whatsoever is more than these cometh of  
evil.

These words of our Saviour CHRIST are very explicit, and God forbid that we should seek to weaken and explain them away; or to evade their obvious force and meaning, by a merely human gloss. Yet may it be humbly suggested concerning the preceding passage, and all that follows, down to ver. 42, that the blessed words are not to be taken so much *in their Letter*, as *in their Spirit*. By which, it is not meant that they are to be only admitted *in part*: but that their full height, and depth, and breadth,—their entire scope,—their real meaning,—is to be sought for in the other revelations of the SPIRIT: to be illustrated by the other sayings, and by the actions, of

our LORD and His chiefest Saints. For as, when the same Divine Speaker commands us to call no man our Father on earth<sup>a</sup>, He *cannot* be thought to forbid the ordinary language of nature; so here, He cannot be supposed to forbid that in a Court of Law, (for example,) a man should take the oath prescribed by competent authority. Nay, on a certain occasion, He took it Himself<sup>t</sup>. There are instances of Divine swearing, in Genesis xxii. 16 (compare Hebrews vi. 13), the Psalms (cx. 4), and elsewhere. St. Paul again solemnly calls God to witness, in more than one of his Epistles: for example, in Rom. i. 9: 2 Cor. i. 23: xi. 31: Gal. i. 20: Philipp. i. 8: 1 Thess. ii. 5.—What is here forbidden, must be rash, needless, and irreverent swearing, to which the Jews in the time of our LORD, (like the common people at the present day among ourselves,) must have been singularly addicted.

To these words of CHRIST, St. James refers in his Epistle (v. 12), when he says,—“But above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by Heaven, neither by the Earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”

And this, they were not to do “*at all*.” They were not to look upon some oaths as more binding than others; but to learn that *all* causeless swearing was offensive in the eyes of Him with

<sup>a</sup> St. Matt. xxiii. 9.

<sup>t</sup> St. Matt. xxiv. 64.

whom they had to do,—since *every* oath alike<sup>1</sup> is an invocation of God's presence.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An 38  
eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth :

These words are found in Exod. xxi. 24, Lev. xxiv. 20, and Deut. xix. 21. An injured man was thereby permitted to inflict exactly as much injury as he had received,—*but no more*.

But I say unto you, That ye resist not 39  
evil :

Of old, as we have seen, there had been a precept forbidding men to inflict *unequal* retaliation : but our LORD (who came “to fulfil the Law”<sup>2</sup>) forbids men to retaliate *at all* : whereby, certainly, the object of the ancient precept was most effectually secured. His prohibition, (as an old writer observes,) “cuts off the *beginnings* of sin. The Law corrected faults ;—but the Gospel removes *the occasion* of them.”

but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, 40 and take thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to 41 go a mile, go with him twain.

Concerning the spirit in which all these re-

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. v. 17.

markable commands are to be taken, see the note on ver. 37.—The attentive reader of the Gospel will remember how the Saviour of the World at different times, fulfilled every precept which He has here delivered ; thus enforcing His own words by His own Divine example. But it should be well observed that it was in their *spirit*, not in their *letter*, that He fulfilled them. Thus, though “He gave His back to the smiters,” (as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold of Him long before, (l. 6,) yet, instead of courting the malice of one of the officers, (for example,) when he struck Him with the palm of his hand, we find the language of mild remonstrance on our Saviour’s lips :—“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou Me?” No there can be no doubt, that the acts of the Redeemer are the best commentary on His spoken words.

In like manner, when Ananias, the High-Priest commanded that St. Paul should be smitten on the mouth, the Apostle simply denounced a false prophecy against him, —which moreover was strictly fulfilled. Now, it is obviously fair to presume that the lives of our Lord’s greatest Saints may be taken, in some degree, as a living commentary upon the precepts which they were commissioned to deliver.

As regards Lawsuits, again, (see ver. 40,) it w

\* St. John xviii. 23.

† Acts xxiii. 2, 3.

remembered that the HOLY SPIRIT in another place expressly allows of them, so that they be inducted before the Brethren<sup>1</sup>. And, as some one has piously remarked, Men who would injure their neighbours must be resisted, lest, by those very actions, they should prove the ruin of themselves. See the note on ver. 42.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

This must be because we are Stewards only,—not Lords, of the wealth we call *ours*. We are not the channels of God's bounties. Nothing can *illegally* belong to *us*, since *we* belong to God.

But neither will this precept, any more than the preceding ones, bear taking in its very letter; or the foundations of Society would be overthrown, and we should be narrowing, not enlarging to, the largeness of the Divine requirement. Nor may the precept be interpreted exclusively of money; or it would be addressed only to a section of mankind. See the note on ver. 37.

The only certain saying of "the LORD JESUS" which has been preserved to us, not recorded in the Gospels<sup>2</sup>, may be called to memory in connection with ver. 42.

By all these injunctions, then, *the inner* rather

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 1—6.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xx. 35. "Remember the words of the LORD JESUS, how he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"



than *the outer man*, is schooled to holiness and virtue.—The blow may be warded off,—nay, ~~it~~ <sup>you</sup> may be right to punish the man that dealt it: ~~you~~ <sup>yet</sup> may the injured person, inwardly, turn the ~~other~~ <sup>his</sup> cheek to the offender, and grieve but for ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> sake. The action at Law may be defended, in that ~~spirit~~ <sup>spirit</sup> of Love which, while it sets the well-being of Society above its own private ease and quiet, would willingly,—if it dared,—withdraw its claim to the contested prize. The violent man may be resisted, if he oversteps his commission; yet may the heart be unconscious, all the while, of strife. Lastly,—love may compel us to withhold many a gift,—to refuse many a prayer,—to be firm against many an appeal. . . . “And who is sufficient for these things?”

Consider in connexion with these last remarks the tears of CHRIST over Jerusalem<sup>b</sup>,—at the very time that His avenging sword was drawn against the city. And, to compare small things with great, Joseph’s *tears*,—even while he *bound* Simeon<sup>c</sup>.

But it may not be forgotten that this new spiritual code,—or rather, this spiritual exposition of the ancient Mosaic Law,—though popularly spoken of, as peculiar to the days of the Gospel,—is to be met with, in all its essential features, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. CHRIST came, indeed, not to destroy the Law, but “*to fulfil*” it

<sup>b</sup> St. Luke xix. 41.

<sup>c</sup> Genesis xlii. 24.

## ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

we have seen, in verses 22, 28, 34, 39, 44, the Law is to be fulfilled. But, to as many as have "ears to hear," this, the *true* method of interpreting "the letter" in "the spirit<sup>d</sup>," had been plainly pointed out "to them of old time." In Deut. x. 16, the great Lawgiver will be seen to have already made Circumcision, a *usual* ordinance. Consider also Deut. v. 21, and viii. 3. Also Exodus xxiii. 4, 5; and Leviticus xxv. 21. And so, in a multitude of places.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, 43  
Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate  
thy enemy.

The first half of this command is found in Levit. 19:—the latter clause being the wicked addition of the Pharisees. This was indeed "teaching doctrines the commandments of men;" and rejecting the commandment of God of none by their tradition." Matt. xv. 9, 6. Compare Matt. vii. 1—13.

In a certain sense, however, it may be thought, to hate our *Enemies*, is a precept quite in accordance with the spirit of the Old Testament scriptures. But then, it is only as directed against the *Enemies of God*, that such a sentiment can be allowable: hatred therefore, *not*

Exor. iii. 6.

Deut. vii. 2—5; xxiii. 6; xxv. 17—19; 1 Sam. xv. 2, 3. throughout the Book of Psalms: e. g. cxxxvii. 7—9.

of *Men*, but of *Sin in men*,—and to this, the Gospel itself is no stranger: see what is said of the loud cry of the souls under the Altar in Revelation vi. 9. Between *this* sentiment and words of tenderest love, (see the next verse,) there is no contradiction whatever. Thus on one occasion, our SAVIOUR was unspeakably gracious to one who had “had five husbands,” and was then living with one who was “not her husband.” On another occasion, He spoke words of encouragement to a poor penitent, who had yet been a notorious “sinner<sup>s</sup>.” The woman “taken in adultery<sup>h</sup>,” was dealt with by the Holy One in this same spirit of compassionate love. There was no indifference to Sin, in any of these cases: God forbid! (“*To destroy the works of the Devil*,” was the special *purpose* for which the Son of God was manifested<sup>i</sup>.) But there was love, unbounded love, towards *Man*. There was the knowledge also, that the victory over Sin, and a renewal to Righteousness, would be best achieved by adopting the way of Mercy. See the note on St. Luke xv. 3.

- 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you ;

As was before remarked, (in the note on ver.

<sup>f</sup> St. John iv. 16—18.

<sup>g</sup> St. Luke vii. 37, &c.

<sup>h</sup> St. John viii. 3—11.

<sup>i</sup> 1 St. John iii. 8.

41.) our Saviour recommended to us all these  
 lovely precepts by His own most holy example<sup>k</sup>.  
 Nay, it had been foreseen by the keen glance  
 of Prophecy, long before, that He would do  
 so. See the concluding words of the fifty-third  
 chapter of Isaiah. David displayed towards Saul  
 a temper here enjoined<sup>l</sup>;—and the first Mar-  
 tyr, Saint Stephen, in like manner, prayed for  
 his murderers<sup>m</sup>. This seems to have the spirit  
 of Moses<sup>n</sup>, and of the Apostle of the Gen-  
 tiles<sup>o</sup>.

That ye may be the children of your 45  
 Father which is in heaven: for He maketh  
 the sun

His Sun!"—the Sun which, on "the fourth  
 day" He created:—which His Almighty Hands  
 clothed with a mantle of Light;—and which He sta-  
 tioned in the visible Heavens to be an emblem of  
 Himself! See Psalm xix. 5, 6.

He sendeth rain on the evil and on the good,  
 and sendeth rain on the just and on the  
 unjust.

It will be a new thought to many, that the Rain  
 and the Sunshine,—descending upon the fields of  
 the just and the unjust alike,—are an argument

<sup>k</sup> Luke xxiii. 34.

<sup>l</sup> 1 Samuel xxiv. 17, and xxvi. 21.

<sup>m</sup> Acts vii. 60.

<sup>n</sup> Exod. xxxii. 32.

<sup>o</sup> Rom. ix. 3.

of God's long-suffering Patience, and unwearied Kindness, and impartial Love.

We have great need to be thus reminded of those common mercies which are poured out impartially upon all; and which fail to strike us, simply *because* they are common mercies.

- 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?

That is,—What reward can you hope to receive at the hands of your Father which is in Heaven? See St. Matthew vi. 1.

Do not even the Publicans the same?

See the parallel place in St. Luke vi. 32, and the note on St. Mark ii. 15.

- 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the Publicans so?

To return evil for good, is the act of devils,—the work of those who are lowest of all, in the scale. To return evil for evil, and good for good (verses 38, 43, 46, 47,) is but low morality,—the act of our fallen Human Nature. But to return good for evil,—or rather, *to do good to all*,—Divine; and this is the course which our Blessed Lord here enjoins upon us.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

A wondrous injunction, truly; and one with which, at first sight, compliance is simply impossible: but it evidently amounts to a requirement that we should live up to the utmost "perfection" of which *our renewed Nature* is capable,—even as the ALMIGHTY hath existed, from all Eternity, in the perfection of *His*. And as we ever trace some resemblance to the Sire in the form and features of the Son, so may we well expect to recognise in the spiritual offspring of God<sup>a</sup>, the likeness of Him who begat them<sup>r</sup>.

It is well that the division of the Chapter was made in this place; in order that the savour of so lofty a command might remain on the heart, and linger in the memory, of him who readeth.

<sup>r</sup> See Genesis vi. 9; xvii. 1; Job i. 1.

<sup>a</sup> Acts xvii. 28.

<sup>r</sup> St. James i. 18.

## The Prayer.

**O** ALMIGHTY LORD, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies in the ways of Thy Laws, and in the works of Thy Commandments; that through Thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in Body and Soul, through our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. Amen.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE SIXTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

1 CHRIST continueth His Sermon in the Mount, speaking of *Alms*, 5 *Prayer*, 14 *Forgiving our brethren*, 16 *Fasting*, 19 *where our treasure is to be laid up*, 24 *of serving GOD and Mammon*: 25 *exhorteth not to be careful for worldly things*: 33 *but to seek GOD's Kingdom*.

HITHERTO, our LORD has been putting His own *ivine Interpretation* on six commands of the *lw*,—"It *was* said," . . . . . "But *I* say:" ch. verses 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43. The 'Sermon on e Mount' proceeds with certain directions concerning *Almsgiving*, (ver. 1 to 4),—*Prayer*, (ver. 5 to 15),—and *Fasting*, (ver. 16 to 18): which are, respectively, the dedication of our Substance,—of r Souls,—and of our Bodies, to GOD. And it is servable that our Blessed SAVIOUR, assuming ch Duty as something known and admitted, tells only on *the manner* in which each is to be rformed.

First, then, concerning *Almsgiving*:—

VI. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them:

It was commanded in the former chapter (v. 16),



“Let your light so shine before men; *that they may see your good works.*” But there is no contradiction between that place, and this: for what was there commanded, was, that by the shining of the light, *our works*, not *ourselves*, should become conspicuous; and that men should be thereby led to glorify, not *us*, but *our Father* which is in Heaven. In like manner, what is here condemned, is, not that Alms should be done before men; but that human observation should be *the motive* of such almsgiving:—“before men,—*to be seen of them.*”

Verily, the caution is needed, even by the best; for it is marvellous how prone we are to be influenced by unworthy motives, even though the Glory of God may be *the chief* object proposed to ourselves in all that we do. The love of Praise, moreover, is an instinct which we derive from God: and to desire the good opinion of our fellow men,—is in itself right. To these instincts our SAVIOUR CHRIST more than once appeals: see St. Luke xiv. 9, 10: also ver. 29. And all this, (which makes the greatness of our trial,) may in part explain why our SAVIOUR dwells at so much length, (verses 1 to 18), on the duty of bestowing Alms,—of Praying,—and of Fasting,—with a single eye to “our FATHER which is in Heaven.”

otherwise ye have no reward of your FATHER which is in Heaven.

That which is expressly stated in ver. 4, is here as plainly implied: namely, that he who acts in a contrary spirit, shall certainly reap a heavenly reward<sup>a</sup>.

Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, 2 do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.

The picture in this verse,—as well as in verses 5 and 16,—of what was common in our Lord's time, reveals in a very striking manner the degraded state of religious feeling,—the moral blindness which had befallen the Jewish people. Many similar hints are supplied in other places of the Gospel: as in St. Matthew xxiii. 2 to 33: St. Mark vii. 6 to 13: St. Luke xi. 37 to 54: xviii. 10 to 12, &c.

And yet, let us beware how we make such remarks in a spirit of self-congratulation: for, (as a good man observes of ourselves,) "When we *do* give, how much of self and how little of God is there in it! The left hand knows what is done: yea, it is done with the left hand,—done, that is, with sinister respects and intentions,—although the bodily right hand does it."

<sup>a</sup> St. Matt. x. 42. Compare Proverbs xix. 17 with St. Matt. xxv. 40. See also Proverbs xxviii. 27: Ecclesiastes xi. 1: Hebrews vi. 10.

Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

They who do such things, "*have* their reward;" that is, they have received already all the reward they ever *will* receive: namely, the observation of men. Compare, for the expression, St. Luke vi. 24. It recurs in verses 5 and 16.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

To fulfil this precept in the letter, is obviously impossible; for "the left hand" must, perforce, know what is done by "the right hand." Yet, herein lies the very fitness and beauty of the image. It is equally impossible for a man to keep from himself the knowledge of his own deeds.

By this expression, however, we are forcibly taught in what spirit all our best actions should be performed. We must not only shun the applause of others: we must shun even our own. To effect this, He who "knew what was in man" knew that it would be needful to keep from us, if it were possible, the very consciousness of what we had ourselves been about.

"An excellent word!" exclaims pious Leighton; "Reflect not on it as thy action, with self-pleasing: for *that* is the 'left hand' in view. But look on God's goodness to thee, in not having placed thee in the Receiver's room and *he* in *thine*: in making

thee able to relieve another, which many are not ; and, being able, making thee willing, which far fewer are. Take thy very giving to thy distressed brother, as a gift from God, and a further obligation on thee. Though *He* is pleased to become thy debtor, yet truly the thing itself is *His* gift and a great one,—as David acknowledges excellently, concerning the offerings to the temple:— ‘But who am I, and what is my people *that we should be able to offer so willingly*, after this sort ? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee<sup>b</sup>.’ Not only the power, but the will, is from God :” and with respect to *both*, the King and his people had but given God of *His own*.

that thine alms may be in secret :

4

It can scarcely be necessary to add the remark, that the point of these directions concerning Almsgiving is *not* that it should “be in secret ;” but that it should be done *to GOD’S glory*,—with a single eye to *His* praise. Such Almsgiving will, doubtless, commonly be secret ; but it will not lose its character because it may happen to be done in the full light of day, and where it is sure to attract observation.

“When it must be public,” says Leighton, “let thy intention be secret. Take no delight in having the eyes of men on thee ; yea, rather count

<sup>b</sup> 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

it a pain,—and still eye God alone, for He eyes thee.”

and thy FATHER which seeth in secret,

“Remember,” (continues the same holy man,) “even in public acts of charity, and other such like, *He sees in secret*. Though the action be no secret, the spring, the source of it, is; and He still looks upon *that*: *He sees by what weights the wheels go*; views thy heart, the hidden bent and intention of it, which man cannot see. So then, though, in some cases, it is necessary to be seen in order to do,—yet, in no case, do, in order to be seen.”

Himself shall reward thee openly.

Or, as it is elsewhere expressed,—“Thou shalt be recompensed at the Resurrection of the Just.” See the last note on ver. 1.

A caution follows on the subject of Prayer: and in ver. 6, certain directions concerning *Private* Prayer.

- 5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

° St. Luke xiv. 14.

As before remarked, (see note on ver. 1), it is not the praying in the Synagogues, or in the streets, which our LORD here condemns; but the hypocrisy of so praying in order to "*be seen of men.*" Consider the behaviour of the Pharisee, in the Parable: (St. Luke xviii. 10 to 12,) also the language of our LORD, as recorded by St. Matthew, xxiii. 5.—See above, the notes on ver. 2.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy FATHER which is in secret;

"*When thou hast shut thy door.*" To such minuteness of detail does the LORD of Heaven and Earth condescend! What shall we venture to call a trifle, if so small an act as this, does not escape His notice,—nay, is put forward by Him, almost as the condition of prevailing Prayer?

The door should be more than "shut." Our LORD says "locked." See the last words of the note on St. Luke xi. 7.

and thy FATHER which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

These words are found in ver. 4, (where, see the note;) and will recur in ver. 18.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think

that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

“Much Speaking,” which our SAVIOUR here condemns, is not the same thing as *much Praying*. This, He recommended to us by His precept, when “He spake a Parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint<sup>d</sup> :” and enforced by His own Divine example, when He “continued *all night* in prayer to God<sup>e</sup>.” It is rather, the employment of many irreverent and useless words in our approaches to the Throne of Grace. We have an example of the “heathen” practice in this respect, in 1 Kings xviii. 26 to 29 ; where it is related that “the Priests of Baal called upon the name of Baal from morning to noon, saying, O Baal hear us !”

Holy Scripture does indeed contain examples of very lengthy prayers,—as in 1 Kings viii. and 2 Chronicles vi. : Nehemiah ix. : Daniel ix. : St. John xvii. : but these were offered up on extraordinary occasions. On the other hand, the LORD’s Prayer,—“*after which manner*” we are instructed to pray,—is exceedingly brief. Briefer still, is the pattern of prevailing prayer in St. Luke xviii. 13 : and such was the prayer of our SAVIOUR Himself in the garden,—a prayer, moreover, which He repeated (not “vainly !”) three times<sup>f</sup>. Consider, again, the character of those Prayers which

<sup>d</sup> St. Luke xviii. 1.

<sup>e</sup> St. Luke vi. 12.

<sup>f</sup> St. Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44.

re answered by displays of miraculous power: LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me an<sup>s</sup>.”—“LORD, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed<sup>h</sup>.”—JESUS, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!”—“LORD, that I may receive my sight<sup>k</sup>.”—and the like. Such, too, are all the fragmentary traditions which survive, of the primitive services of the Church: and our Collects are all constructed in the same spirit of severe brevity. The holy men by whom they were compiled must have been deeply impressed with the pious sentiment adopted by Hooker from the Book of Ecclesiastes 2):—“HE is above, and we upon Earth; therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few.” One of the moderns has well remarked,—“If a heart is close to Him in ever so short a prayer, there is much said in a little. We usually speak many words, and say little.”

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for our FATHER knoweth what things ye have needed of, before ye ask Him.

We do not pray, in order to inform God of our needs; but in order to entreat Him to supply them. See the Collect, beginning “Almighty God, the fountain of all Wisdom,”—at the end of the Communion Service.

<sup>s</sup> St. Matthew viii. 2.  
<sup>k</sup> St. Luke xviii. 38.

<sup>h</sup> St. Matthew viii. 8.  
<sup>k</sup> St. Luke xviii. 41.



But, (it may be thought,) If God “knows our necessities before we ask,”—what can be the necessity of asking?—We answer, first, That it is *the Divine Will* that we should Ask, in order that it may be Given,—Seek, in order that we may Find,—Knock, in order that it may be Opened<sup>1</sup>: and this reply should be final. The Vessel must be brought to the Fountain in order that it may be filled . . . . . But secondly, it should be remembered that the limit to the bestowal of God’s mercies is created not by *His* unwillingness to bestow, but by *our* inability to receive. The miraculous supply of Oil “stayed” not, until that confession of the Widow’s son, “There is not a vessel more<sup>m</sup>.” By Prayer, our hearts become enlarged for the reception of the Divine Gift. *That* turning of the Heart to God prepares and fits us for the Blessing which He is ever prepared to bestow, but which we are not always prepared to receive.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye :

Our Blessed Lord delivered to His Disciples the Prayer which follows, also on another occasion: in compliance, namely, with their request that He would “Teach them how to pray<sup>n</sup>.” He prefaced it, then, by the injunction,—“when ye pray, *say* :” thereby bestowing His sanction, for ever, on *set forms of Prayer*. On this occasion, the LORD’s Prayer is introduced by the words,—

<sup>1</sup> St. Matth. vii. 7, 8.    <sup>m</sup> 2 Kings iv. 6.    <sup>n</sup> St. Luke xi. 2

"*After this manner pray ye.*" The LORD'S PRAYER is, accordingly, at once the most frequent of all our prayers; and the pattern on which the others are constructed. See the end of the note on ver. 7.

### Our FATHER

By "the Spirit of Adoption," "because we are sons," we address GOD as "*Our Father*:" for, to as many as believe, "giveth He power to become the sons of GOD<sup>a</sup>." "Of His own will begat He us," says St. James (i. 18); us men, "which are made after the similitude of GOD<sup>r</sup>."

"*Our*:" although the prayer is to be said in the closet, privately. This must be, because "we, being many, are one body in CHRIST, and every one members one of another<sup>s</sup>."

which art in Heaven,

For *He* alone is properly the FATHER of all,—as our SAVIOUR hath expressly taught us: "One is your FATHER, which is in Heaven<sup>t</sup>." The compassionate Love which authorized us to draw near to such a presence with words inspiring confidence and affection,—it is impossible sufficiently to admire.

But it is a relation which implies corresponding duties on our side:—"If I then be a Father,"—

<sup>a</sup> Rom. viii. 15.

<sup>r</sup> Gal. iv. 6.

<sup>s</sup> St. John i. 12.

<sup>t</sup> St. James iii. 9, and compare 1 St. John iii. 1, 2, and Galatians iii. 26.

<sup>u</sup> Romans xii. 5.

<sup>v</sup> St. Matt. xxiii. 9.

saith the LORD, by His prophet Malachi,—(i. 6,) “where is Mine honour?”

“Which art *in Heaven*,” because it is especially *there* that He manifests His glory. But “behold, the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain” Him<sup>u</sup>. Consider Psalm cxiii. 6.

Hallowed be Thy Name.

This, since it is the first petition in the LORD’s Prayer, expresses what should be the foremost anxiety of every Christian heart,—namely, the honour of God’s Holy Name. By such language, we stand pledged to hallow it ourselves; “not only with our lips, but in our lives.”

#### 10 Thy Kingdom come.

“The child of God,” being also “an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven,” is impatient for the coming of that Kingdom. “Beseeching Thee,” (as it is said in the Burial Service), “that it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy Kingdom.” But “what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness<sup>x</sup>,” who say such words as these?

We pray here for the establishment of CHRIST’s Kingdom; and not only that we ourselves may have our place in it, but that the same Kingdom may have a place also in ourselves<sup>y</sup>.

Thy Will be done

<sup>u</sup> 1 Kings viii. 27.    <sup>x</sup> 2 St. Pet. iii. 11.    <sup>y</sup> St. Luke xvii. 21.

This entire petition may be understood as marking anxiety on the part of the Creature, to behold universal obedience to the Creator's Will: or rather, to behold the conformity of all other wills to His. See the note on the same petition in St. Luke xi. 2. But this former clause is especially the language of personal submission; of humble and entire acquiescence in the decrees of a higher Power. See St. Luke xxii. 42, and Acts xxi. 14.

It may be regarded, moreover, as a prayer for guidance: a prayer that God would 'direct our steps according to His Word';—and that 'the words of our mouth, and the meditation of our heart may be alway acceptable in His sight,'—who is 'our Strength and our Redeemer'.

in Earth, as *it is* in Heaven.

This latter clause is applicable to each of the three petitions which go before. The Holy Name,—the Heavenly Kingdom,—the Divine Will;—to be perfectly hallowed,—to have fully come,—to be entirely obeyed;—every thing must be "*in Earth, as it is in Heaven.*" The words themselves reveal, incidentally, the order which must reign in the Courts above,—where, in all respects, as the SON here assures us, the FATHER's will is done . . . . As Hooker lay a-dying, one of his friends inquired his present thoughts: to whom

\* Psalm cxix. 133.

\* Ps. xix. 14.

he replied,—“That he was meditating the number and nature of Angels, and *their blessed obedience and order*; without which, peace could not be in Heaven: and, oh that it might be so on Earth!”

# 11 Give us this day

Whereby our LORD teaches us to “take no thought,”—(that is, to repress in ourselves all undue anxiety,)—“for the morrow<sup>b</sup>.” The Christian’s anxieties (as we have seen) are already enlisted on behalf of the coming of CHRIST’S Kingdom. How shall he then “make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof<sup>c</sup>?”

our daily bread.

That is,—“Send us all things that be needful both for our Souls and Bodies:” as will be found more fully explained in the note on St. Luke iv. 4. But we are taught to pray only for the supply of our *daily needs*. Nature is satisfied with little,—says a good man: Grace, with less. “And, having food and raiment, let us be therewith content<sup>d</sup>.”

“Our daily *Bread*:” the simplest fare! And no promise is ever held out to us of more. “Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily—*thou shalt be fed*<sup>e</sup>.”

For more than this, Agur prayed not, when he

<sup>b</sup> St. Matth. vi. 34.

<sup>c</sup> Romans xiii. 14.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 8.

<sup>e</sup> Psalm xxxvii. 3.

said,—“Give me neither Poverty nor Riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain<sup>f</sup>.”

Observe, however, that this is not only a prayer for food and raiment; but also a prayer that our food and raiment may be of *GOD'S* giving,—that is, may be honestly and fairly earned. “For,” as an old writer remarks, “to him God gives bread, who earns it by righteous means; but to him who earns it by sin, the Devil it is who giveth.”

Indeed, the bread which is unfairly obtained, is not truly *ours*, but another man's. Neither can those supplies be fairly regarded as our own, of which a share should be distributed to him that needeth<sup>g</sup>.

The richer sort of persons find it hard to realize the belief that their daily food comes from God; and so, may feel as if this petition were out of place on their lips. Such persons should be reminded, that, by saying,—“Give us this day *our* daily bread,” they do in effect say,—“Give *Thou* to us this day, the bread which belongs to us.” As if their language were,—“Let the bread which is ours, come to us this day *sanctified by Thy Almighty Hands!*”

But we must look for a yet deeper meaning in this petition,—as will be more fully shewn in the

<sup>f</sup> Proverbs xxx. 8, 9.

<sup>g</sup> Ephes. iv. 28.

note on St. Luke iv. 4. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment<sup>b</sup>?" Wherefore, in the words of our Saviour CHRIST,—“Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness; and all these things,”—that is, all that is required, for your temporal support and welfare,—“shall be added unto you<sup>i</sup>.”

## 12 And forgive us our debts,

“Debts,” in this place, is clearly equivalent to “trespasses” in ver. 14,—with which word, we are more familiar. The expression informs us of the relation in which we stand to God: reminds us, that we are under *an obligation* to fulfil His commands. Hence the Parable which sets forth the duty of Forgiveness of Injuries, relates the History of two *Creditors*<sup>k</sup>: and of kindred application is the Parable of “a certain Creditor which had two *Debtors*<sup>l</sup>.”

With the present place, the language of St. Luke xi. 4 should be compared; and it will be seen that the word translated “sinners” in St. Luke xiii. 4, is rendered “*Debtors*,” in the margin.

In this fifth petition, then, we pray for daily remission, daily cleansing, daily renewal: admitting by this, our daily sacrifice of Prayer, the self-same thing which was anciently witnessed by the Daily Sacrifice of a victim by the High-priest,

<sup>b</sup> St. Matth. vi. 25.

<sup>i</sup> St. Matth. vi. 33.

<sup>k</sup> St. Matthew xviii. 23 to 35.

<sup>l</sup> St. Luke vii. 41. See also St. Matth. v. 25, 26.

—"first for his own sins, and then for the people's<sup>m</sup>."

For "there is none that doeth good, no not one<sup>n</sup>." We fall into sin, daily; and the sum of those many little sins, makes a large amount in the end. 'They are more in number than the hairs of my head,'—as the Psalmist speaks; 'they have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up<sup>o</sup>!'

as we forgive our debtors.

The mercy we shew towards others, is here proposed by ourselves as the measure of the mercy we desire to experience at God's Hands. So strictly do we stand bound, and pledged, to shew forgiveness to other men! For, on this condition only, do we presume to ask forgiveness for ourselves.

This petition, then, becomes a terrible one on the lips of the implacable man,—for thereby, he closes the Gate of Mercy against himself; and declares his own dreadful sentence.

And here, by the way, the plain and obvious meaning of the plea urged, is not to be lost sight of. Mercifulness with respect to *debts of money* is, of course, to be understood, where the language of pecuniary obligation is so distinctly employed.

See the notes on verses 14 and 15.

And lead us not into Temptation. 13

<sup>m</sup> Hebrews vii. 27: referring to Levit. xvi. 11 and 15.

<sup>n</sup> Psalm xiv. 3, quoted in Romans iii. 10 and 12.

<sup>o</sup> Psalm xl. 12.



This is not, of course, a prayer that God will not "tempt" us, by solicitations to sin; for in *that* sense "God tempteth no man," as St. James declares<sup>p</sup>. But it is a prayer that we may not "be led" into circumstances of Trial; in which sense "God tempted Abraham<sup>q</sup>," and indeed tempts all His Saints. The meaning of the petition therefore is, humbly to deprecate that *trial should be made* of our constancy: and this, because it but too commonly happens that for men to be tempted, is for men to fall. "Considering thyself, lest *thou* also—*be tempted*," writes the Apostle<sup>r</sup>. And so, our Blessed SAVIOUR, on more than one occasion, said to His disciples,—"*Watch and pray that ye enter not into Temptation*."<sup>s</sup>

But St. James says, "My brethren, count it *all joy* when ye fall into divers temptations<sup>t</sup>." These passages however, are easily reconciled. We may not *seek* Temptation. The weakness of the Flesh, as already remarked, should teach us even to dread it. But when, in the course of God's 'good Providence, and the pursuit of our known duty, we find ourselves involved in circumstances of trial, then we are taught to "count it all joy:" for then, it may be humbly hoped that the Tempter beholds in us that living principle of earnestness which it is the whole business of himself and his accursed emissaries to assail, and if

<sup>p</sup> St. James i. 13.<sup>q</sup> Genesis xxii. 1.<sup>r</sup> Galat. vi. 1.<sup>s</sup> St. Matthew xxvi. 41. St. Luke xxii. 40 and 46.<sup>t</sup> St. James i. 2.

possible to destroy. Persons so "*led into Temptation,*" are "*led by the SPIRIT<sup>a</sup>,*" as we learn from the example of our glorified Head; and, as members of His mystical Body, we may humbly hope to be continually supported by His Spirit through the conflict; as well as to be crowned with victory, after His glorious pattern, in the end.

But deliver us from Evil :

Whether from within, or from without :—from the evil of our own hearts<sup>v</sup>, or from the evil suggestions of the Enemy<sup>x</sup>, and his Angels<sup>y</sup>. It is in fact a prayer that "from all Evil, and Mischief: from Sin: from the crafts and assaults of the Devil: from God's wrath, and from Everlasting Damnation: from all Blindness of heart: from Pride, Vain-glory, and Hypocrisy: from Envy, Hatred, and Malice, and all Uncharitableness: from Fornication, and all other deadly sin: and from all the deceits of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil,—the good LORD would *deliver us.*"

As, in the former petition, we prayed unto God that it would please Him 'to save and defend us in all dangers, ghostly and bodily;' so, in this, we implore Him 'to keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our Ghostly Enemy, and from Everlasting Death.'

In this broad manner we are content to take

<sup>a</sup> St. Matthew iv. 1, &c.

<sup>v</sup> Romans vii. 23. St. James i. 14.

<sup>x</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 11: 1 St. Peter v. 8.

<sup>y</sup> Ephes. vi. 12.

this great petition ; though learned men are of opinion that, in the strict letter, the words should be interpreted,—“ Deliver us from the *Evil One* :” and they are probably right. The Reader is referred to the note on St. Luke iv. 6.

See what has been remarked on this petition in the corresponding place of St. Luke’s Gospel (ch. xi. 4) ; and note, that those many expressions in the Psalms, which speak of Enemies, and pray for Victory or Deliverance<sup>a</sup>, may be considered, in their spiritual meaning, to look in the direction of the present petition. On Christian lips, they convey a desire akin to that here expressed.

For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory, for ever.

For the Kingdom we pray for, is Thine :—Thine, also, is the Power to bestow every blessing of which we stand in need :—and Thine, Thine only, be the Glory ! . . . . The same language is found in 1 Chron. xxix. 11,—which see.

Amen.

By the word ‘Amen,’ we set our seal to every petition which has gone before. The word implies devout assent<sup>b</sup>,—or earnest desire<sup>c</sup>,—as in this

<sup>a</sup> The same remark applies to St. Matthew v. 37, and to 1 St. John v. 19.

<sup>a</sup> Psalm liv. 5 : lix. 1, 10 : cxliii. 12, &c., &c.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Corinth. xiv. 16 : Deut. xxvii. 15, &c.

<sup>c</sup> Jeremiah xi. 5 : xxviii. 6. Nehemiah viii. 6.

place : hearty belief,—or solemn confirmation<sup>d</sup>,—as at the end of the Creed. It is often translated “Verily,”—as in verses 2, 5, and 16, of the present chapter : and is personally applied to CHRIST Himself, in the Book of Revelation,—iii. 14.

Such, then, is the Prayer which the LORD hath taught us ; and which He twice repeated,—as if in token that it is a perfect summary of all our actual needs ; an enumeration of all our lawful desires. Thus we are “to say<sup>e</sup> ;” or, “after this manner<sup>f</sup>.” No petition, therefore, should be offered up to the Majesty on High, which cannot be fairly brought under one of these seven heads. Indeed the very desires which fall not within the compass of one of these petitions, may be pronounced unlawful.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, <sup>14</sup> your Heavenly FATHER will also forgive you : but if ye forgive not men their tres- <sup>15</sup> passes, neither will your FATHER forgive your trespasses.

It seems worth remarking that the petition,—“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us,” is the only portion of the LORD’S Prayer for which no parallel has been traced out in the prayers of God’s ancient People. For every other petition, some corresponding one

<sup>d</sup> 1 Kings i. 36. Numb. v. 22.

<sup>e</sup> St. Luke xi. 2.

<sup>f</sup> St. Matt. vi. 9.

has been discovered ; which leads to the interesting belief, that, on this occasion, our SAVIOUR did but put together materials with which His Hearers were, for the most part, familiar. But in respect of the petition which pleads for Mercy, by promising to be merciful in turn, He is found to have been "like unto a man that is an Householder ; which bringeth forth out of his Treasure things *new*," as well as "*olds*." And this may be the reason why it is the only petition to which the Blessed Speaker recurs : the one He singles out from the rest for the solemn yet simple comment, contained in these two verses.

- 16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance : for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Having considered the duty of Almsgiving, and Prayer, our Lord proceeds to the duty of Fasting : for *a duty* must *that* be which is spoken of, as Fasting is, in ver. 17.—Compare verses 2 and 5, and the notes thereon.

"Prayer" and "Fasting" are frequently joined together by the SPIRIT : as in the following places of Holy Scripture :—Psalm xxxv. 13 : Daniel ix. 3 : St. Matthew xvii. 21 (St. Mark ix. 29) : St. Luke

\* St. Matthew xiii. 52.

ii. 37: Acts xiv. 23: 1 Cor. vii. 5.—“Prayers” and “Alms” are conjoined in Acts x. 4.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ;

Our LORD alludes, specially, to the manners and fashion of His own time. But His words teach us that whatever of usual outward observance cannot be neglected without attracting undue notice, must continue to be practised, during seasons of Fasting.

that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy FATHER which is in secret: and thy FATHER which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

With this verse, compare verses 4 and 6. The precept concerning Fasting, like those concerning Almsgiving and Prayer, regards *Purity of Intention*: a caution the more necessary, inasmuch as mortifications and austerities seem to have nothing to do with Pride. But Pride may lurk in sackcloth;—and it is more formidable, from that very circumstance, than when it comes abroad arrayed in finery.

It is obvious that, in many other ways besides his, “Fasting” may be “made of none effect:”—as, when it is not attended with purity of life; when it is made to consist in a mere varying of food,—not an abridgement of meat and drink; or

when we practise simplicity at our tables, in order thereby to save the more,—not for CHRIST'S Poor, but *for ourselves*. But we may be sure that our LORD has here laid His finger on the most dangerous deceit of any:—the snare which most effectually renders our good works worthless in His sight.

On “seeing *in secret*,” see above, the note on ver. 4.

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon Earth,

As our LORD recurred, at the end of His pattern-prayer (ver. 14), to one of the petitions which had gone before (ver. 12,)—so here does He recur, if not to Almsgiving, (of which He had spoken in verses 1 to 4,) at least to a topic close akin to it,—namely, the Vice to which it stands opposed. Indeed, He has been thought, in this and the following verses, *to recommend Almsgiving*; and certainly there are parallel expressions in St. Luke's Gospel, which favour the opinion: see St. Luke xii. 33, 34. Moreover, there can be no surer way of depositing one's goods in safety than by placing them in the hand of Him who, (in the person of His poor,) stretches out His hand to receive them. “He that hath pity upon the poor, *lendeth unto the Lord*,” said the wise man: “and that which he hath given, *will He pay him again*.” “Give to the poor, and

<sup>b</sup> Proverbs xix. 17.

—*thou shalt have treasure in Heaven*<sup>1</sup>,” was the language of our LORD Himself, on a certain occasion. But to interpret this passage of Almsgiving, *only*, is perhaps to take too narrow a view of our SAVIOUR’S wondrous words: which are rather a warning against Covetousness,—verses 19 to 24; and a caution against undue Anxiety about the things of this life, verses 25 to the end.

It may be admitted, however, that the preceding verse, and those which follow, grow naturally out of the subject treated of at the beginning of the present Chapter, and stand in the closest connexion with it: as though the object of the Blessed Speaker had been to remove the chief impediment to the free bestowal of our worldly goods,—namely, the lust to heap up a fortune.

where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :

As though He said,—Why lay up thy treasure here, where thou thyself fleest as it were a shadow, and never continuest in one stay? where, even before thou thyself departest, the thief may rob thee of it in a moment; where, though spared by him, the moth will destroy it; where, lastly, every thing thou lovest contains within itself the principle of decay?

“They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches,” were of old reminded that they must “perish and leave

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xix. 21 : St. Mark x. 21 : St. Luke xviii. 22.



*their wealth to others*<sup>k</sup>." "Surely," (it was said) "men are disquieted in vain. He heapeth up riches and *knoweth not who shall gather them*!" But, more solemn, by far, is our SAVIOUR's warning: more prevailing by far the motive which *He* suggests. Compare the note on St. Matthew vii. 1.

- 10 But lay up for yourselves treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

O wondrous Love, which would not deprive us even of these, His lower gifts: but would teach us to bestow them, where we may find them, after many days! O yet more wondrous skill, which can provide a means whereby the perishable things of earth may be conveyed away, and deposited in the eternal Mansions!

That we ourselves have here no abiding city, we know: that we look for a House, eternal in the heavens<sup>m</sup>, we admit. Why are we so lothe, then, to send our goods on before us,—our treasures,—whatsoever they may happen to be? He who is the Author and Giver of all good things, offers to become the Guardian and Keeper of them also. How does it happen that so few have the heart *to trust Him*? What does He, in this place,

<sup>k</sup> Psalm xlix. 6 and 10.

<sup>i</sup> Psalm xxxix. 6. Compare Ecclesiastes ii. 18.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. v. 1.

but advise us to transfer our fruits to a higher floor; where they shall be in no danger of the fate which, here below, is inevitable? "For Riches certainly make themselves wings. They fly away as an Eagle." And wherefore should not their flight be, like the Eagle's,—"*towards Heaven*"<sup>m</sup>?

For where your Treasure is, there will 21  
your Heart be also.

This, then, is the reason which our SAVIOUR assigns for the precepts which go immediately before. He desires nothing less than that our hearts should be drawn upwards; that to Heaven, all our thoughts should point: and so, that our conversation should be in Heaven<sup>n</sup>,—"hid with CHRIST in God<sup>o</sup>."

And since our 'Treasure,'—of whatever kind it may happen to be,—has this wondrous power of drawing the heart after it, and up to it; *who* sees not that the foregoing precept is of vaster extent than might, at first, be expected? Does it not address the mourner?—reminding him that he has *lost* nothing; that he has but laid up his treasure in a place where he will find it after many days; and that the withdrawal of that which was the delight of his eyes, is but a summons to him to 'lift up his heart;'—a warning to him to "set his affection on things above, not on things on the earth<sup>p</sup>?"

<sup>m</sup> Prov. xxiii. 5.

<sup>o</sup> Coloss. iii. 3.

<sup>n</sup> Philip. iii. 20.

<sup>p</sup> Coloss. iii. 2.

## 2 The light of the body is the Eye :

Rather,—“The *lamp* of the body.”—Expressions strictly parallel to this verse and the next, are to be found in St. Luke xi. 34; but they will be perceived to stand in quite a different connexion, and to have quite a different bearing. How are we thereby reminded of the breadth of application claimed by His words, who spake as never man spoke !

Sin enters at *the eye* : compare ch. v. 28, 29,—and the notes there. The organ which was meant to be the avenue of Light to the Body, thereby becomes the channel by which Pollution enters, and darkness abounds. How little are the blind aware of their blessedness !

if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

Rather,—“*liberal* ;” for *that* is the meaning of “single,” in this place. The connexion with what went before, is close and obvious.

## 3 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

“Evil,” in the sense of “*illiberal*,”—as in St. Matth. xx. 15.—We are hereby assured that nothing so effectually blinds the eye, and thus blocks up the intended avenue of light,—darkening the whole inner man,—as Covetousness.

Consider, in connexion with this saying of our LORD, the character and conduct of Judas Iscariot.

If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !

That is,—“How great” must “the darkness” be, which is thus deprived of the means of illumination !

No man can serve two masters : 24

These, and the following words, will be found repeated in St. Luke's Gospel,—xvi. 13: but, as before<sup>a</sup>, in quite a different connexion.

for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.

Our LORD puts two cases,—the one the converse of the other. And observe the exquisite accuracy of the language employed :—For either, (He says,) a man must hate Satan, and love God : or else he must “hold to” Satan,—(who *cannot* become the object of human *love*;) and “despise” God,—(who *cannot* become the object of human *hate*). Now, *he* “holds,” or “attaches himself, to” Satan, who seeks Satan's rewards : and what does *he* do, who disregards God's threats and promises, but “despise” Him ?

Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

<sup>a</sup> See the first note, above, on ver. 22.

"Mammon" is the Syriac title for 'the god of this world:' but, in this place, the name stands for *Lucre*, generally. The deep meaning concealed in the expression, appears from another place of Scripture; where the Apostle, speaking of "Covetousness," immediately adds,—"*which is Idolatry*."

Some persons may be disposed to fancy that an undue space is given to some Sins,—to Covetousness for example,—in the Sermon on the Mount. Any one so thinking, should be reminded that we are, and can only be, *learners*, here. He may be referred, also, to the concluding note on chapter vii. Touching the particular sin of Covetousness, let the History of Balaam, of Achan, and of Gehazi, in the Old Testament; of Judas, of Ananias, and of Sapphira, in the New,—be to us a sufficient warning of our danger. How can a warning against *the sin of Judas*, by possibility, occupy too conspicuous a place in the Gospel of CHRIST?

- 25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your Body, what ye shall put on.

"Take no *thought*,"—does not mean that we are to make no provision. Very far from this,

\* 2 Cor. iv. 4. Compare St. Luke xvi. 9. • Colosa. iii. 5.

indeed, is implied by the whole tenour of Scripture. St. Paul declares that "if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." The "bag" which contained the common fund, whereby the daily need of the Son of Man and His followers was supplied<sup>n</sup>, shewed *thought*.

Nor yet is labour forbidden. St. Paul wrought with his own hands<sup>v</sup>: and commanded "that if any would not work, neither should he eat<sup>w</sup>." "Go to the Ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise," saith the SPIRIT: "which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest<sup>x</sup>." The Divine Injunction does but prohibit *distracting anxiety—over-carefulness* about the things of this life.

But if it is forbidden that concerning necessary things,—as meat, and drink, and clothing,—we should feel anxiety; how offensive to Almighty God must engrossing schemes of Ambition, and of Pleasure,—solicitude about Luxuries, or about Trifles,—be!

Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Shall not, therefore, He who so curiously built

<sup>v</sup> 1 Tim. v. 8.

<sup>w</sup> St. John xii. 6 and xiii. 29.

<sup>x</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9. Acts xviii. 3: xx. 34.      <sup>y</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 10.

<sup>z</sup> Proverbs vi. 6—8.

the Body,—and so wondrously endowed it Life,—provide both for the covering of the and the support of the other? Is not the best of the greater gift, an assurance and a pledge the lesser will not be withheld either?

- 26 Behold the Fowls of the air: for sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.

Verily, "The LORD is good to all, and tender mercies are over all His works!" concern of Almighty God for these His creatures is apparent from many parts of Scripture. Consider the following places:—Deuteronomy xxii. 6, 7: Leviticus xxii. 28: Exodus xxiii. 19 (repeated, in xxxiv. 26, and Deuteronomy xiv. 21): Deuteronomy xxv. 4: Exodus xxii &c.

Are ye not much better than they?

Every hint concerning that great mystery, brute Creation,—when it comes from the mouth of the CREATOR Himself, is precious. Conform with this place, St. Matthew xii. 12.

- 27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Rather, "unto his term of life." The

7 Psalm cxlv. 9.

traversed in a man's earthly course; length of days,—not altitude of stature,—is the object of solicitude here specified.

And why take ye thought for raiment? 28  
Consider the Lilies of the field, how they grow ;

The Author of Creation turns to another class of His works. He *could* have instanced the gorgeous plumage of birds,—the lovely colours, and the wonderful texture of *their* clothing: but He prefers to descend a step in the scale of Being, and appeal to the world of Flowers.

Hither He invites *our* attention also. The injunction stands for evermore,—“Consider the lilies of the field !”

they toil not, neither do they spin :

Neither “toil,”—as men, for the materials of clothing; nor “spin,”—as women, whose office it is to give shape to those materials, and make them fit for use. Consolation is intended for either sex.

and yet I say unto you, That even Solo- 29  
mon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

No Jewish Monarch ever attained to such worldly magnificence as Solomon; who ‘made silver and



gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones<sup>a</sup>;" "was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon<sup>a</sup>." His fame brought the Queen of Sheba to his court: and when she "had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of servants, and the attendance of his ministers, *their apparel*, and his cup-bearers, and his array by which he went up unto the House of the Lord—there was no more spirit in her. And she said unto the King, It was a true report that I heard of mine own land; . . . and behold, the half was not told me<sup>b</sup>."

The CREATOR here declares that the strewn and freckled flower, blooming unseen or uncoloured, is more beautifully arrayed than "even Solomon, in all his glory." And we need only "consider," in order to convince ourselves that so much Truth is not more widely removed from Falsehood than are the natural hues of flowers from the artificial garments of men.

- 80 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow shall be cast into the oven,

He ranks "the lilies" with "the grass of the field," and notices their ordinary fate: but in order to shew us how little they are worth, as a reminder of the reason why.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Chron. i. 15.

<sup>a</sup> 1 Kings x. 2.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Kings x. 4 to 7.

*shall* He not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith ?

If, then, God hath, in such matchless splendour, clad these His meaner works,—how much more shall He provide for the covering of *Man*; whom He created *in His own image*, and endowed with a reasonable Soul; “for whom,” also, “CHRIST died,” and so glorious a destiny is reserved in store !

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ?

Verily, “*To the poor*” the Gospel was preached<sup>c</sup>; —its words of warning, no less than its words of promise ! For, are not Meat,—Drink,—Clothing,—subjects of anxiety rather with *the poor*, than with *the rich* ? Let that class, then, which hath so many glorious consolations in God’s Word, take the present as a solemn caution addressed to themselves.

Our LORD’s words do, indeed, convey a lesson to rich and poor alike; for *daintiness* in Meat, Drink, Clothing,—“*What*,” and “*wherewithal* ;” anxiety, therefore, about the *kind* of thing, rather than about the thing itself,—is here specially forbidden. Moreover, just as the petition for “Daily Bread,” was found to be a prayer that

<sup>c</sup> St. Matt. xi, 5, and St. Luke iv 18.

“God would send us all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies,”—so, doubtless, in every temporal object of personal anxiety included in the present mention of Food and Raiment. But then, the words must be allowed to have their own special, and proper sense; and *that* is never to be overlooked in expositions of Scripture. Poverty has wondrous privileges, mighty blessings, splendid promises; (as well it may! for it is a most heavy and bitter portion): but, doubtless, it has its own peculiar dangers and warnings, likewise: and *this* is one of them.

- 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your Heavenly FATHER knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Compare ver. 8, and see the note there. Observe also, that our LORD, while He declares the Divine Knowledge, admits also the human “need, of all these things.”

The Blessed speaker does not say “*GOD* knoweth;” but,—“*Your Heavenly Father* knoweth.” And the reason is plain. That comfortable appellation is the foundation of all our Hope. If He be *our Father*, then are we *His Children*; and it cannot be that He will overlook us, in our need. Consider those words of Isaiah,—“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, *they may forget*,—yet will I not forget thee <sup>d</sup>!”

<sup>d</sup> Isaiah xlix. 15.

But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, 33  
and His righteousness

"His righteousness:" for all Righteousness is of *Him*, and all our good deeds are *His*. See the following places of Scripture:—1 Corinthians xv. 10: 2 Corinthians iii. 5: Galat. ii. 8: Eph. iii. 7; Philippians ii. 13: St. John xv. 4.

and all these things shall be added unto you.

That is,—Make it your chief concern to please God, and to serve Him; to do as He has commanded, and thus, to hasten the coming of His Kingdom;—(an injunction which, we may be sure, our SAVIOUR here delivered not without special reference to the subject which immediately precedes;)—and then, all these other things will be found to follow. "Godliness," as St. Paul in a certain place declares, "is profitable unto all things; *having promise of the life that now is,*" as well as "of that which is to come." Compare the language of Psalm xxxvii. 3, 4 and 25: xli. 1, 2: all cxii., (to which, the words just quoted from St. Paul, are actually prefixed, as a heading), Prov. xi. 24, 25: xix. 17: xxviii. 27. See especially St. Mark x. 29, 30.

"Almsgiving, or Mercifulness was never the wasting or lessening of any man's estate, to himself or his posterity; but rather, the increasing

\* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

of it." So said the pious and most charitable Dr. Hammond, once, in a Sermon at St. Paul's Cross<sup>1</sup>. A Church dignitary, whose charities were so remarkable and profuse as to provoke the inquiry, How he contrived, having so large a family, not only to subsist, but even to grow rich?—made answer that, several years before, he happened to be present at a Sermon at St. Paul's Cross, where the Preacher, recommending the Duty of Almsgiving, assured his auditory that *that* was the most certain way to acquire Riches. He had accordingly resolved to try the experiment. . . . When this story was told to Dr. Hammond, he admitted that he had himself preached the Sermon which had borne such blessed fruit.

- 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.

He speaks of to-morrow, as if it were a person; and one, sufficiently alive to his own interests,—sufficiently beset with his own anxieties, also,—to render any solicitude for him, on our part, quite superfluous, as well as unreasonable.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

"Evil," is here opposed to Good, generally: not to the good of Virtue, but to the good of Ease, and freedom from Care.

<sup>1</sup> Called *The Poor Man's Tithing*, preached in 1640.

'To-day,'—like "to-morrow," just above,—  
nes forward as a person. He bends beneath  
own proper burden, and asks why he is to be  
ther oppressed by the weight of To-morrow's  
es,—with which he has no concern?

'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'  
rist hath spoken it. With such words let us  
content to resign the future to *His* keeping,  
o surveys the Future, as He does the Past and  
; Present,—at a glance: who shapes it, as He  
ases; and who will enable us to bear whatever  
s Providence shall see fit therein to order for us.



## The Prayer.

**O** GOD, who declarest Thy Almighty Power most chiefly in shewing Mercy and Pity; mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy Grace, that we, running the way of Thy Commandments, may obtain Thy gracious Promises, and be made partakers of Thy Heavenly treasure; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE SEVENTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

1 CHRIST ending His Sermon in the Mount, reproveth rash judgment, 6 forbiddeth to cast holy things to dogs, 7 exhorteth to Prayer, 13 to enter in at the strait gate, 15 to beware of false Prophets, 21 not to be hearers, but doers of the Word: 24 like houses builded on a rock, 26 and not on the sand.

## VII. JUDGE not, that ye be not judged. 1

Are we, then, not to use that critical faculty, which God has implanted in every one of us, whereby we are enabled to judge of actions, and those who perform them? The very supposition is absurd. Some men have a commission given them to judge,—whether in things spiritual or in things temporal. Of *all* it is required that they shall “have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” But what our Lord here condemns is, rash censure; a severe passing of sentence on doubtful actions; an uncharitable judgment based on insufficient evidence. Charity thinketh no evil; . . . believeth all things, hopeth

\* Heb. v. 14.



all things<sup>b</sup>:" but such is not the spirit which prevails amongst mankind. How heavily does this precept of our LORD bear on one of the fashionable vices of what is called "society!"

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" asks the Apostle: "to his own master he standeth or falleth<sup>c</sup>." That is, For his conduct is no affair of thine.—"Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" he presently asks: "For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of CHRIST<sup>d</sup>." That is, For thou wilt have to give an account hereafter for thyself also.—"Judge nothing before the time<sup>e</sup>," says the same Apostle in another place. That is, For the great and terrible Day shall reveal the truth of the matter.—St. James says,—"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law." That is, Judge not, for it is a monstrous and unseemly proceeding in such an one as thou art.—But our Blessed LORD's precept is briefer and stronger. "Judge not," He says, "*that ye be not judged*:" a most weighty reason, and prevailing motive, truly, for withholding or suspending censure. The Divine Speaker proceeds to explain it:

## 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 5 and 7.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. xiv. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Romans xiv. 4.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 5.

shall be judged : and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Which reminds us of the plea we daily urge for forgiveness, in the LORD'S Prayer. "For,"—as St. James speaks,—“he shall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath shewed no Mercy<sup>†</sup>.”

But, is the Retribution hinted at in these two verses, Divine or Human? Doubtless *both* are implied ; though *the English* of the corresponding verses in St. Luke's Gospel, (vi. 37, 38,) as well as ver. 12 of the present chapter, might be thought to shew that it was *this* World's Judgment to which the Divine Speaker chiefly alluded.

The connexion between this verse and the next, (wherein our LORD makes use of a well-known Jewish proverb,) is suggested by that saying of the Great Apostle,—“If we would *judge ourselves*, we should not be judged<sup>‡</sup>.”

And why beholdest thou the mote that is <sup>3</sup> in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye ?

Some remarks on these words will be found in the notes on St. Luke's Gospel,—vi. 41.

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let <sup>4</sup> me pull out the mote out of thine eye ; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye ?

<sup>†</sup> St. James ii. 13.

<sup>‡</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 31.

This verse is not a mere echo of the last. *There*, *Censure* was spoken of, and the person addressed was a *Judge*: *here*, the reference is to *Admonition*, and the person addressed is a *Guide*. Refer to St. Matthew xv. 14; and observe that a parallel to that verse is found in the place which corresponds with the present, in St. Luke's Gospel,—vi. 39. "Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?"

5 Thou hypocrite,

Reminding us of—"Thou wicked Servant!" in St. Matth. xviii. 32.

first cast out the beam out of thine own eye;

Leighton says,—“If thou wouldst find much favour and peace with God and man, be very low in thine own eyes. Forgive thyself little, and others much.” So, also, says Bishop Sanderson.

and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

So that a man is *then* fit to admonish others, when he has first laboured to correct himself, and thereby sharpened his own power of spiritual discernment.

It is highly instructive to notice on how many occasions our LORD directs men to turn from the study of their neighbour's failings to the discovery of their own: as in St. John viii. 7: St. Luke xiii. 1 to 5, &c.—Of kindred interest, is the *prac-*

al turn which the same Divine Speaker gave all merely *speculative* inquiries. As, St. Luke i. 23, 24. St. John xxi. 21, 22, &c.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, 6

Compare St. Matthew xv. 26. See also Deut. iii. 18 : Phil. iii. 2 : Rev. xxii. 15. Dogs and vine—(the latter, an unclean<sup>1</sup> animal,)—are and connected in 2 St. Peter ii. 22.

neither cast ye your pearls before swine, st they trample them under their feet, and rn again and rend you.

Our LORD seems to be still addressing Himself those who are called to be Guides and Teachers, the Dispensers of His Word and Sacraments. this place, He requires them to make proof that faculty of spiritual discernment, for the tainment of which, He gave directions in the eceding verse.

The subject, therefore, is here changed ; but the nnexion of thought is preserved, or rather pur-ed. Not only the mysteries of the Faith,—but en Admonition and Reproof are to be dispensed ith a due regard to men's ability to receive em ; lest the Religion of CHRIST (the Pearl of eat price) be brought into contempt, and its ofessors exposed to insult and outrage.

And, generally, a warning is here given, (very eedful, it may be thought, in these times,) against

<sup>1</sup> Leviticus xi. 8 and Deut. xiv. 8. Isaiah lxvi. 17.

irreverence in regard of holy things ; which may not be discoursed of in all companies,—without respect had to circumstances of time and place.

In what follows there seems to be a change of subject.

- 7 Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Verse 7 to ver. 11, inclusive, will be found to recur, almost word for word, in St. Luke xi. 9 to 13. The allusion is, clearly, to *Prayer* ; as the Church teaches us in the beginning of her Baptismal Service : and earnestness, or rather *importunity*, in Prayer, is the Duty here enforced. By a reference to the place in St. Luke's Gospel, it will be perceived that these injunctions are there preceded by the Parable of the Friend at Midnight ; who hears another 'knock,' and 'ask' for the bread which he is 'seeking.' *That* parable again, is immediately preceded by the Lord's Prayer ;—a circumstance which teaches us to connect the present place with the Lord's Prayer in chap. vi.

How great is our need of these exhortations to *earnestness* in our approaches to God ! Who shall tell the amount of blessedness from which we are excluded,—from which we exclude ourselves ?

Men "say their prayers:" but they do not always *pray*. And this formal service grows upon Christians who are unwary and slothful. "Many that pray," (to use the words of a good man,) "know

little of this Divine art of Prayer ; this wrestling with God ; this resolving not to let Him go until He bless them,—as Jacob did<sup>m</sup>.”

For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

So strictly does God stand pledged to answer Prayer ! Compare also such places as the following,—St. Matth. xxi. 22 : St. Mark xi. 24 : St. Luke xi. 5 to 13 : St. John xiv. 13, 14 : xv. 7, 16 : xvi. 23 : 1 St. John iii. 22 : St. James i. 5, &c.

If any complain that they have ‘ asked,’ ‘ sought,’ ‘ knocked’ in vain ; let them be reminded, (1stly,) That Prayer is *not always* answered immediately : see, for instance, St. Matth. xv. 22 to 28 : St. Luke i. 13 : St. Luke xviii. 1 to 7, &c. And the reason why God sometimes delays His gifts may be, (as a great man has pointed out,) because *that* which is long looked for is sweeter when obtained ; but *that* is held cheap which comes at once.—(2ndly,) That it is often an act of the truest Love to withhold a favour, however earnestly prayed for ; as when God would not suffer St. Paul’s “ thorn in the flesh” to depart from him<sup>n</sup>,—thereby regarding the highest good of His Servant : namely his spiritual perfection. A petition is sometimes granted in wrath, and as a punishment ;—as when God gave flesh to His people in the wilderness<sup>o</sup>,

<sup>m</sup> Genesis xxxii. 26.

<sup>n</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 7 to 9.

<sup>o</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 18 to 31.

and afterwards granted them a King. "I gave them a King," He says, "*in Mine anger*." Consider the petition of the devils which St. Matthew relates, together with its consequences,—viii. 31, 32. Consider further the petition of the Gergesenes, immediately after: with which, also, our LORD complied.—But, (3dly,) take note that Prayer though sometimes actually *refused* (for merciful reasons,) at the time, is sometimes, (*perhaps always*,) eventually answered in a different, (and far higher,) sense than was expected or intended: compare, for instance, Deut. iii. 23 to 27, with St. Luke ix. 28 to 31: St. Mark x. 35 to 40, with St. Matthew xix. 27 and 28: St. John ii. 3, 4, with what follows: and consider the sense in which the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were fulfilled.

But the promise is far oftener fulfilled, in the strict letter, and at once. God commonly answers Prayer immediately, and in the very sense intended by the suppliant. Consider the following texts: Gen. xviii. 23 to 33: xx. 17: xxiv. 12 to 15, — (where observe that Rebekah came out "*before Eliezer had done speaking*," ver. 15:) Numb. xi. 2: Joshua x. 12 to 14: 1 Samuel xii. 17, 18: 1 Kings xiii. 4 to 6: 2 Kings iv. 32 to 35: xix. 15 to 20, and 35: xx. 1 to 6, (where observe that the Word of the LORD came to Isaiah, "*afore he was gone out into the middle court*," ver. 4.) See also verses 8 to 11.—Daniel ix. 3,

<sup>p</sup> 1 Samuel viii. 6 to 9 and 19 to 22.

<sup>q</sup> Hosea xiii. 11.

10, and following verses : (taking note, that "*while the prophet*] *was speaking* in prayer" (ver. 20, 21,) he Angel Gabriel brought an answer to his prayer ; and informed him that "*at the beginning of his supplication* the Commandment came forth" (ver. 23) ; and, that "*from the first day* that he did set his heart to understand, and to chasten himself before his God, *his words were heard* : " (Dan. x. 12.)—St. Matthew viii. 1, 2, 3 : ix. 27, 29.—St. Mark x. 51, 52.—St. Luke xvii. 13, 14 : xxiii. 42, 43, (the case of the Malefactor on the Cross).—St. John iv. 49 to 53.—Acts ix. 11, (the case of Saul of Tarsus, to whom Ananias was sent, "for behold,—*he prayeth.*") : x. 1 to 4, (the case of Cornelius) : xii. 5 to 10, (the case of St. Peter in prison) : St. James v. 16 to 18, &c. &c.

But, because *Faith* is the great support, the very life of Prayer<sup>r</sup>, our Lord next proceeds,—by an argument, the force of which all must admit,—to persuade us that we shall assuredly be heard, and receive the things we pray for.

Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask Bread will he give him a Stone ?

Rather, "Which of you, though he be but a *man*,"—though merely a *human being*. See a remark on the first word of St. Matthew xii. 29.

Or if he ask a Fish, will he give him a 10 Serpent ?

Take notice that it was with "Bread" and

<sup>r</sup> St. James i. 5, 6, 7.



“Fish,” that our SAVIOUR CHRIST—“our Father which is in Heaven,” (see verse 11), on three several occasions supplied the earthly needs of His children:—twice on the eastern side of the Lake when He fed (1st) the five thousand,—St. Matth. xiv. 17 to 21; and (2nd) the four thousand,—St. Matth. xv. 34 to 38; (3rd) after His Resurrection when He shewed Himself to the seven Disciples at the ‘Sea of Tiberias,’—St. John xxi. 9 to 13.

# 11 If ye then, being evil,

That is,—notwithstanding the evil which dwells in all of you. This, then, is one of the many places where the corruption of Man’s nature, (the doctrine of *Original Sin* as it is called,) is clearly laid down.

know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him!

Compare with this, the Parable of the Unjust Judge,—St. Luke xviii.: especially verses 6 and 7.

Take notice, also, that in the parallel place of St. Luke’s Gospel\*, instead of “good things,” there is a promise that our Heavenly Father will give “the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask Him.” *That*, then, is *the* good thing we ought to pray for; and which we do pray for, on ‘Christmas-Day,’—on the ‘Sunday called Quinquagesima,’—on the ‘Sunday

\* St. Luke xi. 13.

after Ascension Day,'—on 'Whit-Sunday,'—and on the 'Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.'

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would 12 that men should do to you, do ye even so to them :

This golden precept reminds us of the two first verses of the present chapter ; as will appear more clearly by comparing them with the corresponding place in St. Luke's Gospel,—vi. 37, 38. Compare also St. Luke vi. 31.

for this is the Law and the Prophets.

As it is elsewhere said,—“ Love is the fulfilling of the Law : ” and again,—“ All the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this ; ‘ Thou shalt love thyneighbour as thyself’ ” Compare St. Matt. xxii. 37 to 40. The meaning is, that the teaching of Moses and the Prophets with respect to our Duty towards our Neighbour, may be reduced to this.

The connexion of ver. 12 with what goes before, is not very obvious. But as our LORD, at the end of His Prayer in the vi<sup>th</sup> Chapter<sup>v</sup>, enforced the duty of a Forgiving Temper towards others, as the necessary condition of our obtaining forgiveness at God's Hands,—so, here, He teaches us how we must act towards others in order to secure a favourable hearing for ourselves when we come ‘ asking,’—‘ seeking,’—‘ knocking,’—at the Heavenly Gate.

<sup>i</sup> Romans xiii. 10.      <sup>u</sup> Gal. v. 14,—quoting Levit. xix. 18.

<sup>v</sup> St. Matth. vi. 14, 15.

## 13 Enter ye in at the strait gate :

However strait and narrow the Gate by which we enter, may be,—however rugged and painful the Way beyond it, may prove,—the Christian Pilgrim should remember that there is no lack of room<sup>x</sup>, of pleasure and enjoyment<sup>y</sup>, beyond. The ease and delight to be experienced *there*, will abundantly make up for all trouble and hardship by the way.

for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to Destruction, and many there be which go in thereat :

Mention is made not only of the strait and the wide *gate*, but of the narrow and the broad *way*,—in order to remind us that as no one falls into the hands of Satan, unless he walks “in the way of sinners<sup>x</sup>,” so can no one hope to enter into Life, but by *walking*, first, in “the way of God’s Commandments<sup>a</sup>,” and *treading* “the path of Life<sup>b</sup>.”

Take notice that as we read but of *two* ways,—and of *two* gates,—so are we told of but *two* conditions hereafter; namely, *Life*, and *Destruction*. No mention is made of a *third* course in this World, or of a *third* place in the next! Every man, therefore, is travelling along one of those two roads; and is daily drawing nearer either to

<sup>x</sup> St. John xiv. 2.

<sup>y</sup> Psalm xvi. 11: xvii. 15: xxxvi. 8.—Isaiah lxiv. 4 (quoted 1 Cor. ii. 9).—Romans viii. 18.—Rev. xxi. 10 to 23.

<sup>a</sup> Psalm i. 1.

<sup>a</sup> Ps. cxix. 32.

<sup>b</sup> Psalm xvi. 11.

Eternal Happiness, or to Eternal Misery. See the note on the last part of St. Matth. iii. 12.

because strait is the gate, and narrow is 14 the way, which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.

Observe, that the strait gate and the narrow way, require *to be found*. The other needs no search: *they* find it who go astray. "Yet, so much pains is there taken *to find it*," says Sanderson, "that I verily believe half the pains many a man taketh to go to Hell, would have brought him to Heaven."

Observe also, that under the figure of "a gate," our first entrance on a religious life is here discoursed of: and that by calling it "*strait*," our LORD teaches us to expect to find the first beginnings of Religion, our first steps in Holiness, difficult. Evil habits to be broken off,—old companions to be parted with,—constitute a severe trial. But, thenceforward, begins that Peace which the World can neither give nor take away; and St. Paul has told us what should be the conduct of him who runs in a race, with so glorious a prize in view. See Philippians iii. 13, 14.

Not that "the gate" is "*strait*," or "*the way*" "*narrow*," in themselves. It is the loftiness of Pride, and the swelling thoughts of the heart, which makes the gate seem "*strait*:" the encumbrances of Wealth, and the allurements of Pleasure, which make the way seem "*narrow*."

- “Learn of Me,” is the gracious exhortation of our
- SAVIOUR CHRIST: “for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls<sup>c</sup>.”
  - “*I am the Door*. By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved<sup>d</sup>.” “*I am the Way* . . . . No man cometh unto the FATHER but by Me<sup>e</sup>.”

Very solemn and affecting is the prediction with which this verse concludes. We are disposed to inquire with that “one,” whose question, but not whose name, has been recorded;—“LORD, are there few that be saved<sup>f</sup>?” Most instructive is the answer he received,—which, we may be sure, is addressed by CHRIST to His Church, for ever,—“*Strive ye earnestly to enter in at the strait gate*.” The curious questioning is repressed,—the hearty endeavour is encouraged,—in that, and every other place of Scripture. See above, on verse 5.

The next verse contains a warning against false Teachers,—Guides who may not be trusted by those who desire to find the strait Gate.

## 15 Beware of false Prophets,

“False Prophets,” are generally false *Teachers*. They who taught, with a special and direct commission from GOD, were often miraculously endowed by Him with the power of foretelling future events; but they were not called Prophets for *that* reason; nor was *that*, by any means, the only, or even the chief, part of their office. They were called *Prophets* because they declared the

• St. Matthew xi. 29.

• St. John xiv. 6.

<sup>d</sup> St. John x. 9.

<sup>f</sup> St. Luke xiii. 23

mind of God, *on GOD'S behalf*;—whether respecting things past, present, or to come. See St. Matt. xiv. 5: xxi. 11. St. Luke vii. 16: xxiv. 19. St. John ix. 17, &c.

The 'Man of God' was not mindful of the present precept, when he accepted the invitation of the 'Old Prophet,'—as related in 1 Kings xiii. 11 to 32. How interesting is the coincidence of that chapter, (which is appointed for the first lesson on the Eighth Sunday after Trinity,) with the words before us,—which are the first words of the Gospel for the same Day!

which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Since Christians are called "sheep," "sheep's *clothing*" will signify the outward appearances of Religion. St. Paul probably alluded to these words of our LORD, and to St. John x. 12, when he said to the elders of the Church of Ephesus,—*"I know that after My departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."* Compare Ezekiel xxii. 27.

Consider, also, 2 Corinthians xi. 13 to 15.

Ye shall know them by their fruits. 16

These words supply the connexion of thought in all that follows, to the end of the chapter. Men's *works* are henceforward spoken of; and first, under the similitude of *fruit*; according to

the frequent practice of Holy Scripture. See, for instance, St. Luke iii. 8. Presently, (namely, in ver. 21), the Divine Speaker will proceed to say that it is *works* not *words*, which He requires: the *fruits* of Faith,—not mere protestations, which like leaves, often give false promise<sup>b</sup>. Lastly (namely, in ver. 24), He will contrast the fate of those who *hear* His sayings, and *do* them, with that of those (in ver. 26) who *hear*, yet *do them not*.

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Does not St. James,—iii. 12,—allude to these words of his LORD; or to the parallel verse in St. Luke's Gospel,—vi. 44?

- 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth  
good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth  
18 evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth  
evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring  
forth good fruit.

Take note, that our LORD,—speaking of men and their actions under the figure of trees and their fruits,—does not say that a good tree cannot become corrupt; or, that a corrupt tree cannot become good;—but only, that *while a Tree continues good or evil*, its fruit must be strictly corresponding. To become good, the wild olive must be grafted into the Good Olive-tree: the branch must abide in the Vine: *then* only do men ex-

<sup>b</sup> See St. Mark xi. 13.

perience renewal, when they are made partakers of the Nature of CHRIST: they are fruitful, only so long as they "abide in Him." See St. John xv. 2, 4, 5, 6, &c. . . . . Refer to the note on St. Matt. xiii. 23.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

MESSIAH, here, employs the very language which His Forerunner had used before Him,—as recorded by St. Matthew iii. 10.

See the second note on St. Matthew iv. 17.

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

The Divine Speaker, before passing on to another branch of His subject, here recalls the words with which He began. See the first words of ver. 16.

A test is hereby supplied us,—doubtless the most safe of any,—whereby to judge of those who come to us with claims on our submission, and Belief. Are they jealous for the true honour of ALMIGHTY GOD,—His Holy Name, His Holy Word, and His Holy Day? Are they obedient to authority,—loving,—pure,—honest,—truthful? Of charitable speech,—and contented tempers? If not, "by their fruits ye shall know them" to be other than what they pretend to be.

Let those who have left the Church of their Fathers, and lost her Spirit, "hear,"—if yet they have "*ears to hear.*"



- 21 Not every one that saith unto Me, LORD, LORD,

Compare St. Matthew xxiii. 7.

shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ;  
but He that doeth the Will of My FATHER  
which is in Heaven.

It is not enough therefore to profess Christianity,—to use the prayers of the Church,—and to call upon the Name of CHRIST;—but to this must be added diligence in doing His known Will. Many there are, who, in the words of the Apostle, “*profess* that they know God, but *in works* deny Him<sup>1</sup>.”

For the connexion of thought between this verse, and what precedes, see the note on ver. 16.

*Obedience* is made the condition of acceptance, and the test of Love, throughout the Bible :—consider, 1 Samuel xv. 22 : Hosea vi. 6 : St. John xiv. 15, 21, 23 : xv. 10, 14 : 1 St. John v. 3, &c.

- 22 Many will say to Me in that Day,

“Say *unto Me* :”—observe how the Divine Speaker here secretly brings in the mention of *Himself*, as the Judge of all flesh !

“*In that Day*,”—the great and terrible Day of CHRIST, when He shall come “in the glory of His FATHER with the holy Angels<sup>2</sup>.” The Day of Judgment is frequently so spoken of by our LORD

<sup>1</sup> Titus i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark viii. 38.

and His Apostles,—as if always occupying so conspicuous a place in the sphere of their mental vision as to make further description superfluous:—see St. Luke x. 12: 2 Thess. i. 10: 2 Tim. i. 12 and 18: iv. 8, &c.

LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works?

“In Thy Name,”—that is, By Thy authority. Compare St. Matthew xviii. 20: St. Mark ix. 38, 39: St. Luke x. 17, &c.

This may be literally done, by evil men:—as when Pharaoh's Magicians for a while contended with Moses,—Exodus vii. 11, 12: 22: viii. 7. See also Acts xix. 13 to 15, &c.; and consider the cases of Balaam, of Saul, of Judas, and of Caiaphas.

We learn, hence, that lowly graces are more to be coveted than mighty gifts: since *these* are sure to win for their possessor a share of the Divine favour, whereas *those* often prove the severest trial. Whence the Apostle could truly say to the Corinthian Church, after reviewing their wondrous spiritual endowments,—“And yet shew I unto you *a more excellent way*<sup>k</sup>:” proceeding, forthwith, to discourse to them of “that most excellent gift of *Charity*,—the very bond of Peace and of all Virtues.”

“Gifts are as gold, which adorns the Temple,”

<sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 31.

says Burkitt: "but Grace is like the Temple that sanctifies the gold."

It is remarkable how many parts of the Sermon on the Mount have reference to those who are Guides or Teachers. See verses 4, 5, and 6, of the present chapter. The warning in ver. 22 seems especially addressed to those who are in the Ministry.

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you :

That is,—Openly declare that I never acknowledged you as Mine. God is said *to know* those only of whom He approves. See Ps. i. 6. St. Matthew xxv. 12. St. Luke xiii. 25. 1 Cor. viii. 3, &c.

depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.

What a miserable picture is discovered to us here! But the startling circumstance in all this, is, the manifest *self-delusion* of those who will be so addressed. This is, surely, very much to be noted. "Many will say to Me, in that day,"—is the prophecy of Him to whom the Future, like the Present, and the Past, is fully known. Men could not address such words to their Judge, unless they believed them true, also.

And yet, this declaration as to what will be hereafter, should create no astonishment. Death separates the soul from the body, but it does not change the heart or the mind. If, then, men live

and die in a state of self-delusion,—as we see men daily doing,—should it surprise us to be told that they will at last wake up, in the same state in which they fall asleep?

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings 24  
: Mine, and doeth them,

“If ye *know* these things,” says our LORD in a certain place, “happy are ye if ye *do* them<sup>1</sup>.” And such is the constant language of Holy Scripture,—as in St. Luke xi. 28: St. John ix. : Romans ii. 13: St. James i. 22 to 25, &c. The connexion of this verse with the preceding, has been pointed out in the note on ver. 16.

In what follows, *the end* of those who are hearers of the Word,” and of those who are hearers only,” is set forth: and it is worth remarking that both classes of persons, alike, are presented as *building for themselves a House*. It only to one class does that House prove a place of refuge and shelter; to the other, it proves a very chamber of Death.

I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his House upon a Rock:

See the note on St. Luke vi. 48.

and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that House; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a Rock.

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiii. 17.

"And that Rock was CHRIST<sup>m</sup>,"—as it is said in another place: "for other foundation can no man lay." "Now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the Day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward<sup>n</sup>."—So constant is the imagery of the SPIRIT!

David, in like manner, speaks of CHRIST as "the Rock of his Salvation<sup>o</sup>." Compare also what is said by the prophet Isaiah,—(as he is interpreted by St. Paul<sup>p</sup>, and St. Peter<sup>q</sup>,)—of *the Rock* laid in Sion;—on whom "whosoever believeth . . . shall not be ashamed<sup>r</sup>."

This reference, however, to one of His own titles, was not the *primary* meaning of our SAVIOUR's words,—although it was doubtless comprehended in them. And indeed, those words of His have a yet deeper meaning, which it shall suffice to allude to, briefly. For *who* is the "Wise Man" spoken of in the text, but CHRIST Himself,—who is sometimes called WISDOM<sup>s</sup>? And what is the "House" intended, but His Church, which

<sup>m</sup> 1 Cor. x. 4.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11 to 14.

<sup>o</sup> Ps. lxxxix. 26: xcvi. 1. See also Ps. xix. 14: xxviii. 1: xlii. 9, &c.

<sup>p</sup> Romans ix. 33.

<sup>q</sup> 1 St. Peter ii. 6.

<sup>r</sup> Isaiah xxviii. 16.—Note, that *shame* will be the portion of the sinner, in the last day. See Daniel xii. 2. Revel. vi. 15 to 17, &c.

<sup>s</sup> Namely, throughout the Book of Proverbs.

He hath so builded on a rock<sup>t</sup> that it shall never fall; and concerning which it had been said, long before, by the Spirit of Prophecy, "WISDOM hath builded her House?" . . . The Church of CHRIST is the House of CHRIST; for He hath "builded the House," and is "as a Son over His own House; whose House are we<sup>x</sup>:"—"God's building<sup>y</sup>," as the Apostle speaks; against whom neither 'rain,' nor floods,' nor 'winds,'—no, nor the very gates of Hell itself shall prevail; "if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end<sup>z</sup>."

And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his House upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that House; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Some remarks on these words, the Reader will find in the notes on St. Luke vi. 49.

But *when* do 'the rain'—'the floods'—and 'the winds,' conspire to try the stability of the structure here described? In part, doubtless, in the Day of Adversity. *Then* is the building put sorely to the proof. But the Great and Terrible Day of the LORD it is, which will bring with it the

<sup>t</sup> St. Matth. xvi. 18.

<sup>y</sup> Proverbs ix. 1.

<sup>x</sup> Hebrews iii. 3 and 6.    <sup>z</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 9. Compare 2 Sam. vii. 13

<sup>z</sup> Hebrews iii. 6.

severest trial. The miserable man who has rested, all his life long, in a barren, formal assent to the Doctrines of the Gospel, will then be found to have built his House on the sand: while those blessed ones who have been rather *faithful doers*, than *frequent hearers* of God's Word, will then be "clothed upon" with "a building of God, an House not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens<sup>a</sup>."

"Oh! take heed," says pious Leighton, "of founding your house in the sand. Though ever so stately and fair built, and shewing fine, yet that foundation will be its ruin. There is no safe building but on the rock,—*that* Rock of Salvation who here taught this doctrine. Then, come storms as they will, there can be no fear. 'He that buildeth on Him shall not be ashamed<sup>b</sup>.' No matter what houses or lands ye have *here*, whether any or none,—(He Himself had none *here*;)—provided you build on Him, as the Foundation of eternal blessedness! Oh, that men would think of this; and amidst all their ensuring of things still unsure, would mind the making of *this* sure, which may be made so sure for ever as not to be moved!"

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Thus ends the "Sermon on the Mount,"—the fullest connected specimen of our SAVIOUR's teaching which the HOLY SPIRIT has seen fit to set on

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. v. 1.

<sup>b</sup> 1 St. Peter ii. 6.

record. We cannot surely survey it too carefully, or study it in too humble and teachable a temper. Perhaps it will be well to consider it partly as a map,—wherein the broad outlines of Christian duty are clearly laid down : partly as a mirror,—in which we behold ourselves, that is, our fallen Nature, faithfully reflected.

Considered as a Map of Christian Duty,—we are reminded that some of the lowliest graces are the most highly prized in God's sight : Humility, Meekness, Mercifulness, (chap. v. 1 to 12.) Next, that under the Veil of the Law, were hid the features of the Gospel : (verses 17 to 20) the Law of Love, under the Sixth Commandment,—the Law of Purity, under the Seventh,—and the like. (Verses 21 to 48.)

Considering the Sermon on the Mount as a Mirror,—and therefore as intended to teach us something about ourselves,—how startling is it to discover, (it would be more becoming, perhaps, to say,—How startling is it, *to be reminded,*) that our chief danger, whether we give Alms, (vi. 1 to 4),—Pray, (ver. 5 to 15)—or Fast, (ver. 16 to 18), is on the side of *Vain-glory* ! arises out of *our desire of human praise* ! See chap. vi. 1, 5, 16 ; and the notes thereon.

Surprising, also, seems the assurance in chap. vi. 14, 15, that we require so very special a dissuasive against cherishing *an unforgiving temper* !

The large space occupied by the warning against *Covetousness*, (ver. 19 to 24) and *Worldly Anxiety*,



(ver. 25 to 34), is surely a most instructive circumstance. This has been already remarked upon in the last note on chap. vi. ver. 24.

In the way of Precept, the last of these three Chapters (chap. vii.) is chiefly remarkable for the golden rule of Duty which is laid down in verses 1, 2, and 12. It contains also a weighty exhortation to Earnestness,—first, in Prayer, (ver. 7 to 11, which is to be taken in connexion with the great Pattern of Prayer in chap. vi. 9 to 13 ;) next, in working out our own Salvation (ver. 13, 14.) The Mirror is again held up to Human Nature by the warning against Hypocrisy, Deceit, and Self-Delusion; whether in ourselves (ver. 3 to 5: ver. 21 to 27): or in others, (ver. 15 to 20.)

The Discourse ends by contrasting the condition of the Righteous and the Wicked; and by describing what will be their fate in the great and terrible Day. And whereas it is sometimes said that a Sermon should always end with cheerful words of Hope and Encouragement, it is observable that in this specimen of Divine Teaching the last place has been reserved for the miserable fate of him who “hears” the words of CHRIST, without “doing them.”

28 And it came to pass, when JESUS had  
ended these sayings, the people were as-  
29 tonished at His Doctrine: for He taught  
them as One having authority, and not as  
the Scribes.

This may, doubtless, refer to the form in which our LORD delivered several of the foregoing precepts; see chap. v. verses 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44, &c.; and to the language of authority adopted by the Divine Speaker throughout the entire discourse. Moses and the Prophets had said,—“Thus saith the LORD:” but our SAVIOUR’S Word was “*I say unto you.*” “Being the Master of Law, He uttered things which were above the Law; changing the Letter to the Truth, and he figures to the spiritual meaning.” More than that, however, seems to be implied by this statement of the Evangelist concerning the effect which our SAVIOUR’S teaching produced on the multitude who listened. It is a hint,—one of the many hints scattered up and down the Gospels,—that, (as might have been expected,) there was something in the manner of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST which awed and impressed beholders to a remarkable extent. Consider the following places:—St. Mark i. 22, (where the self-same words occur, and where see the note:) xi. 18: St. Luke v. 15, and 20 to 22, and ver. 32: xix. 47, 48: St. John vii. 43 to 46: xviii. 6, &c.

## The Prayer.

**S**TIR up, we beseech Thee, O LORD  
wills of Thy faithful people ; that  
plenteously bringing forth the fruit of  
works, may of Thee be plenteously rewa  
through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. An

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE EIGHTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

2 CHRIST cleanseth the leper, 5 healeth the Centurion's servant, 14 Peter's mother in law, 16 and many other diseased: 18 sheweth how He is to be followed: 23 stilleth the Tempest on the Sea: 28 driveth the devils out of two men possessed, 31 and suffereth them to go into the swine.

As the thirteenth Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel is *The Treasury of Parables*, so is this chapter and the next (the viii.<sup>th</sup> and ix.<sup>th</sup>) *The Treasury of Miracles*. Throughout the three last chapters, we have been listening to the wondrous *Words* of CHRIST;—in these two, some of His mightiest *Works* are set before us. The *Works* were or a Confirmation of the *Word*. See St. Mark vi. 20: St. John iii. 2: v. 36: x. 25, 38, &c. Hebrews ii. 3, 4, &c.

VIII. When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.

We shall find that this concourse of persons,—the same which had been listening to the Sermon on the Mount,—followed our LORD into Capernaum; compare verses 5 and 10. On the day after, they

followed Him to "a city called Nain." See St. Luke vii. 11.

2 And, behold, there came a leper

It would appear,—from a comparison of verse 5 with St. Luke vii. 1, 2,—that the Historical order of events has been disregarded by St. Matthew, in this place. The HOLY SPIRIT has set the cure of one afflicted with leprosy *before* that of the Centurion's Servant who was "sick of the palsy" (ver. 6.)

Doubtless, this was done with a deep motive. And when it is remembered that *Leprosy*, in Scripture, is the type of *Sin*,—it will perhaps seem a reasonable supposition that the Divine intention, in thus giving the foremost place to a case of leprosy, may have been, thereby to imply the purpose with which our SAVIOUR came into the World: (namely, to heal that more terrible malady which infected the whole Human Race, and which the disease of leprosy represented); as well as to teach us that the bodily diseases which the Great Physician went about with purpose to cure, are *all* to be regarded as typical of the disorders of the soul. See the note on the last part of St. Luke v. 13: also the note on St. Mark ii. 3: also below, on ver. 17.

The miraculous cleansing of the leper, which follows, is recorded in three Gospels, being found also in St. Mark i. 40 to 45; and St. Luke v. 12. to 15.

and worshipped Him, saying, LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.

see the note on St. Mark i. 40.

his man "worshipped" CHRIST; as the Wise men had done<sup>a</sup>, and as so many others did: which very much means that they fell down, or knelt before Him<sup>b</sup>. Did he know Him to be the SON of GOD? In the full sense of the term, it is *quite incredible* that he should have done so; but his offering, Faith he brought,—whatever it may have been, our SAVIOUR graciously accepted. "We are commonly not satisfied with anything that comes up to our own height;" (says a good man:) but our meek REDEEMER accepts of what he offers, even the very least, and extols it to the highest pitch it is capable of."

And JESUS put forth His hand, and blessed him,

How precious is every hint of *this* kind,—which the SAVIOUR, as it were, before our eyes! But how far more precious is the consolation which this act of our SAVIOUR affords: in proving that nothing is too loathsome to obtain cleansing from Him!

Sometimes, our LORD cured by a touch,—as in St. Mark viii. 22 to 25. Sometimes, by a word,—as in St. John v. 8. Sometimes, by neither word nor touch,—as in St. John iv. 50. On this occasion,

t. Matt. ii. 2.

Compare this place with St. Mark i. 40, and St. Luke v. 12. Compare also St. Matt. ix. 18 with St. Mark v. 22 and St. Luke vi. 1.—Again, compare St. Matt. xv. 25 with St. Mark vii. 25.

He employs *both* instruments. See the n St. Luke v. 13 : also the first note on St. 41. But observe that it was neither the *Sav* touch, nor the SAVIOUR's word,—but the *Sav Will* which wrought miracles. The outwari were but for the sake of the by-standers. C however, whether, besides every other rea touching this Leper, there may not have be merciful wish thereby to *comfort* the mi sufferer.

saying, I will ; be thou clean.

Take notice, here, that our SAVIOUR n strictly granted the man his implied petition by repeating the very words He had just used, reminds us that the largeness of *His* r often corresponds exactly with the extent Faith. See below, the last note on ver. 13

Leighton says,—“And thus, in His Wo speaks to Sinners ; where He hath reveal *Will* together with His *Power* : and, that w doubt it not, we may read it in His blood stre forth for our cleansing. Yet, if any one o

changed from what He was, He '*will*' pity thee, and thou shalt find it."

And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Or, as it is added in St. Mark,—"*as soon as He had spoken*"<sup>c</sup>: for, (in the language of an Eastern Bishop) "even this word '*immediately*' is too slow to express the speed with which the deed was done." Such, then, is the answer which God grants to Prayer! See the notes on St. Matthew vii. 8.

And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell 4  
no man ;

This is a difficult command to explain with certainty. It was delivered, probably, because the knowledge of this miracle, instead of proving a benefit to certain of those whom the Leper would have "told," was likely to prove a curse;—either by provoking Blasphemy or Unbelief: or by exciting them to some act of malice. And thus our Lord, by His own practice, exemplified the precept which He delivered in the foregoing chapter,—namely, that we may not 'cast our pearls before swine.' (vii. 6.) The injunction will be found further explained in the concluding note on the first Chapter of St. Mark's Gospel.

but go thy way, shew thyself to the Priest,

This is sometimes perverted, so as to make it

<sup>c</sup> St. Mark i. 42.



appear by analogy that, in the case of the Christian Priesthood, it is needful in order to the cure of spiritual Leprosy,—that is, of Sin,—that thou “shew thyself to the Priest.” Whereas, it is manifest that as the cure of *Diseases*, in reality, rests with God; (and Leprosy, in particular, was known to be incurable by human skill); so none can forgive *Sins* but God only; and the plain fact is that the object with which the afflicted person shewed himself to the priest under the Law, was not *his cure*; but only in order to have his state pronounced upon,—to be ‘bound’ or ‘loosed’ *by authority*. For thus we read in Leviticus,—“He shall be brought unto the priest: and the priest shall go forth out of the Camp, and . . . look; and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper, then shall the priest . . . *pronounce him clean*,”—with many significant ceremonies, for which see Leviticus xiv. 2 to 7, and following verses.

Compare with the present place St. Luke xvii. 14.

and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

“The gift” will be found described in Leviticus xiv. 10. Take notice how true was that saying of our LORD,—“I am not come to destroy” the Law and the Prophets, “but to fulfil<sup>d</sup> :” so scrupulous was He, at all times, to require conformity and

<sup>d</sup> St. Matthew v. 17.

edience, and to set an example of it. Indeed, is easy to see that until *the Great Sacrifice* was offered on the Cross, it was proper that the sacrifices ordained in the Law should continue to be offered.

On the last words of this verse, see the note on Luke v. 14.

And when JESUS was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a Centurion, beseeching Him,

this person (the first-fruits of the Gentiles!) a Roman Soldier,—the commander of a company;—who had become a proselyte, or convert to Jewish Religion, and was probably stationed at Cernaum. From St. Luke we learn that his zeal induced him to build a Synagogue in the City where he dwelt, for the use of the Nation whose Faith he had adopted.

and saying, LORD, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

Notice here the man's kindness,—the humanity which brought him thus a suppliant to the great Physician, in behalf of the Slave, "who" (as Luke says) "was dear unto him."

And JESUS saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

'Who is like unto the LORD our God,' exclaims

the Psalmist; "that hath His dwelling so high, and yet humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and Earth?" Yea, He humbled Himself yet more,—if possible: for He made the lowliest, and the meanest, and the weakest, the objects of His largest bounty, occasions for the chief display of His Almighty Power and Love.

- 8 The Centurion answered and said, LORD, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof:

While he counted himself unworthy that CHRIST should come under his roof, (says an ancient Bishop,) he was counted worthy that CHRIST should enter into his heart: and this was a greater boon, and a higher blessedness. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted,"—saith the SPIRIT<sup>f</sup>.

but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

He knew that it was not necessary that our LORD should enter his dwelling in order to work the cure of his servant. He may have had in mind the miraculous cure which our LORD by His mere word, had wrought some time before, on the Nobleman's son, in the same City; being Himself at Cana, all the while. See St. John iv. 46 to 53; and the note on St. Luke vii. 7.

The Humility of the speaker, no less than his

<sup>e</sup> Psalm cxiii. 5.

<sup>f</sup> St. Luke xiv. 11.

faith, shines out in this speech. He was ashamed to think that by the terms of his first message, (for which see St. Luke vii. 3,) he had solicited one whom he *knew* to be God, to come beneath the shadow of his roof. He therefore hastens forth to prevent the gracious intention of the SAVIOUR.

For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*.

That is,—“For *I* am a man *not* supreme in command; but under the authority of a superior officer; and, in turn, having soldiers under *me*: and yet, even *I* say to my soldiers and servants Come, and Go, and am immediately obeyed. How much more must *Thou* be able, who art without superior, or even equal,—*Thou*, to whom all creatures in Heaven and Earth do bow down and obey;—how much more must it be in *Thy* power to say ‘Begone’! to this palsy, which is after all but a servant of Thine!”

When JESUS heard *it*, He marvelled, 10

The stupendous miracle which He was about to work, shewed Him to be “perfect God:”—the feeling of wonder, here noticed, shewed him to be “perfect Man,” likewise; “of a reasonable soul and human flesh.” See the first note on St. John

i. 14. See also the first note on St. Luke viii. 23. Observe, however, that for *our* sakes this act of our SAVIOUR CHRIST is recorded; in order that we may know at what *we* ought to marvel: namely, less at Wisdom, Wealth, and Grandeur, than at the fruits of *Faith*. And observe, that He who is here said to have “*marvelled*,” did but admire the work of His own Almighty Hands; and confess that it was ‘very good.’ Faith, like every other Grace, is *GOD’S* gift.

and said to them that followed,

See the note on St. Luke vii. 9.

Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

That is, among the descendants of Abraham,—notwithstanding all their vaunted claims and real privileges,—our SAVIOUR had not met with such Faith as was exhibited by this Roman soldier; by birth, “an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and stranger from the covenants of promise,”—as it is said in Ephesians ii. 12.

The wondrous vigour of this man’s Faith may be perceived from what has been remarked above, in the note on ver. 9; but it is further worth observing that, by saying, “*Speak the word only*,” and not requesting the actual presence of CHRIST, he surpassed the Nobleman, (who had said “*Sir, come down ere my child die* :”) and Jairus, (who,

ε St. John iv. 49.

anxious for his little daughter, had said "*Come and lay Thy hands on her*<sup>h</sup>:" and Martha and Mary, (who had said "*LORD, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died*<sup>i</sup>"): and many others. He seems to have had the fullest sense that he was addressing the ALMIGHTY.

Note, therefore, that not only did the degraded Nazareth, besides nursing the SAVIOUR of the World, nourish a Joseph and a Mary;—not only did Bethsaida, on which our LORD pronounced such a tremendous doom<sup>k</sup>, produce an Andrew, a Simon, and a Philip<sup>l</sup>;—but Capernaum also, (which, for being more unbelieving than Sodom, was to be hereafter "*thrust down to Hell*<sup>m</sup>," and therefore must have been filled with surpassing wickedness,) contained this pattern of Humility, of Love, and above all of *Faith*. See the note on St. Luke vii. 5.

The reader is referred to the note on St. John i. 44, for the obvious remark which facts like these suggest. Will men dare, in the face of such a history, to pass sweeping censures on large masses of persons? on the inhabitants of a whole village? Shall not these instances of transcendent goodness among a degraded people, rather induce a suspicion that *we* also may be living among unsuspected Saints? that Angels may be dwelling, unawares<sup>n</sup>, at *our* very doors?

<sup>h</sup> St. Mark v. 23.

<sup>i</sup> St. John xi. 21 and 32.

<sup>k</sup> St. Matt. xi. 21, 22.

<sup>l</sup> St. John i. 44.

<sup>m</sup> St. Matth. xi. 23, 24.

<sup>n</sup> Hebrews xiii. 2.

- 11 And I say unto you that many shall from the east and west, and shall sit with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in Kingdom of Heaven :

“ Sit down,”—because the joys of the *Life to come* are likened by our LORD to a Feast where the hungry are filled, and the thirst parched and weary souls is quenched<sup>p</sup>, and all joys abound<sup>q</sup>. A Coronation banquet,—all are crowned kings<sup>r</sup>: while *without*, is darkness,—“*outer* Darkness,” as it is said in the verse. But the comparison of Heavenly to an Earthly Feast, is but ‘a dark shadow of bright glory.’ . . . “Oh, were the things of Eternity, the Misery and the Blessedness to indeed believed, how much would our hearts be in them! and how little room would leave for the trifles and vanities which our hearts are taken up with.”

- 12 but the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness :

“Darkness,”—because removed from the presence of God, who is *Light*. As the be-

<sup>p</sup> St. Matth. xxii. 4, &c. St. Luke xiv. 16, &c. xxii. 30 xix. 9. Compare also St. Luke xv. 23.

<sup>q</sup> Isaiah lv. 1 and lxv. 13: St. Matth. v. 6: St. Luke Rev. vii. 16, quoted from Is. xlix. 10, &c.

<sup>r</sup> See the first note on St. Matth. vii. 13.

<sup>s</sup> Compare Rev. i. 6, and 2 Tim. iv. 8. St. James i. 12 ii. 10: iii. 11, &c.

postle speaks,—“God is Light, and in Him no Darkness at all.” It seems a fitting retribution, that those who, when “Light came into the world, loved Darkness rather than Light *because their deeds were evil*,”—should hereafter suffer the penalty of a “Darkness which may be eternal.”

there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Blessed Speaker here prophesies the abundant gathering in of the Gentiles into the Kingdom of Heaven,—and contrasts it with the final exclusion of many of the Jewish nation, by reason of their impenitence and unbelief. The same contrast will be found in St. Luke xiii. 28, 29,—with which last verse, Genesis xxviii. 14 should be compared.—The Jews were heirs of the promises made to Abraham,—and “Children of the Kingdom,” as our Lord here calls them;—and accordingly, to *them* were the first offers of Mercy and Salvation made. It came even to their very doors; but they put it from them. The wedding was ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy: “and this near miss of Happiness” (as the hath well remarked), “is the greatest misery.” “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to *you*,” said Paul and Barnabas, at Antioch in Pisidia, to their blas-

\* 1 St. John i. 5.

\* St. John iii. 19.

\* Exodus x. 21.

\* See St. Matt. xxii. 8.



pheming Countrymen: "but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting Life,—lo, we turn to the Gentiles; for so hath the LORD commanded us<sup>1</sup>." And to the same effect, St. Paul spoke to the unbelieving Jews at Rome:—"Be it known therefore unto you, that the Salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: and" — he added a memorable prophecy,—"*they will hear it*:" Our LORD had said the like,—in St. Matthew xxi. 43.

But, woe to us if we rise from the study of such passages as these, with a dry lifeless remark on the purely *historical* meaning of the words employed, as they regard Jew and Gentile. They reach much further than the destruction of the Holy City, and the subsequent destiny of the Nation which CHRIST came to save. The 'Children of the Kingdom' are *we*,—as many of us as have the Gospel brought to our very doors; and *that* 'outer darkness' will be *ours*,—if, with splendid opportunities, abundant knowledge, and spiritual advantages of the very highest order, 'we neglect so great Salvation<sup>2</sup>.'

The place of Suffering,—which is reserved for the wicked and impenitent,—is described in terms descriptive of the bitterest bodily anguish. Repentance, which comes too late, draws unavailing tears: and Despair, which shall have no end, causes the teeth to clench with agony. And take notice that such language cannot be called figura-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 46, 47.<sup>2</sup> Acts xxviii. 28.<sup>3</sup> Heb. ii. 3.

tive; since 'they that have done evil' will go *with their bodies* 'into everlasting fire.'

And JESUS said unto the Centurion, Go <sup>13</sup> thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

Shewing that his Faith was *perfect*. Our LORD's words on this occasion are like those which He spoke to the two blind men, in St. Matt. ix. 29. The entire case resembles that of the 'Nobleman,' and should be compared with it. See St. John iv. 50 and 53.

But *did* the Centurion "Go his way?" Not so. He remained with CHRIST,—in perfect confidence that the object of his anxiety, whom he had left "ready to die<sup>b</sup>," was perfectly restored. See St. Luke vii. 10, and the note there.

"As thou hast believed—so be it done unto thee." The measure of Faith is ever made the measure of Blessedness. See above, on the words "I will; be thou clean,"—in verse 3.

And when JESUS was come into Peter's <sup>14</sup> house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

We learn from this verse, incidentally, several facts concerning St. Peter. He was a citizen of Bethsaida<sup>c</sup>, but his dwelling-place was Caper-

<sup>b</sup> St. Luke vii. 2.

<sup>c</sup> St. John i. 44.

naum ; for see verse 5. The House belonged to himself and his brother Andrew<sup>d</sup> : and the Apostle proves to have been a married man. St. Paul states the fact plainly : “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other Apostles, and as the brethren of the LORD, and Cephas<sup>e</sup>?”—which was the name bestowed by our SAVIOUR on Simon, when first the fisherman of Galilee was brought into His presence<sup>f</sup>.

- 15 And He touched her hand, and the fever left her : and she arose, and ministered unto them.

This short, but instructive miracle is related more particularly by St. Mark, i. 29 to 31, and St. Luke iv. 38, 39,—where see the notes ; especially those on St. Mark’s narrative.

- 16 When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils : and He cast out the spirits with *His* word, and healed all that were sick :

See the note on St. Mark i. 32. What a cluster of marvels is recorded in this place !

“*All* that were sick !” We read of *none* that were disappointed,—*none* that were sent away unhealed. Now, “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning ; that we,

<sup>d</sup> Compare St. Mark i. 29. • 1 Cor. ix. 5. <sup>f</sup> St. John i. 42.

through patience and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope <sup>c</sup>."

that it might be fulfilled which was <sup>17</sup> spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

But the words of Isaiah are—"Surely He hath borne our *griefs*, and carried our *sorrows* <sup>h</sup>:" and they clearly refer to the *sins* of mankind rather than to their sicknesses. St. Peter so quotes the Prophet, at the end of the second chapter of his First Epistle: "who His own self *bare our sins* <sup>i</sup>." This, then, is an example of *Divine Interpretation*;—one of the places where the SPIRIT has condescended to be His own Interpreter.

It is reasonable and becoming, here, to point out the close connexion between sin and sickness; and to call to mind how nearly linked are moral evil and bodily ailment: but we must not presume, by such remarks, to explain, and as it were to *defend* the wondrous application of this text by the Evangelist. No one without the express warrant of God's Word to that effect, would have ever supposed,—or been warranted in supposing,—that Isaiah liii. 4 was fulfilled when our SAVIOUR cast out the Spirits from them that were possessed, and healed the sick. This application of

<sup>c</sup> Rom. xv. 4.

<sup>h</sup> Isaiah liiii. 4.

<sup>i</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 24.

Scripture "*is the LORD'S doing*, and it is marvelous in our eyes<sup>k</sup>." See the notes on St. Mark ii. 5.

- 18 Now when JESUS saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

To cross the Lake,—from the Western to the Eastern shore.

- 19 And a certain Scribe came, and said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.

Concerning the Scribes, see the note on St. Mark iii. 22.

The attentive reader of the Gospel turns anxiously to the Note or Comment on all such passages as the present (ver. 19, 20), and that which immediately follows, (ver. 21),—in hopes of being informed *who* this Scribe, and *who* that Disciple, were? It is with a sense of disappointment that the Reader finds his guide silent, and as much at a loss as himself, in the very place where information was wanted most.

He will be tempted to make the remark, that such passages of Scripture cannot have been written in vain. The two incidents before us were set on record for our learning,—and certainly with some higher purpose than merely to inflame our curiosity. He will call to mind an occurrence described in St. Mark's Gospel,—xiv. 51, 52;—and

<sup>k</sup> Ps. cxviii. 23.

disposed to maintain that he who pretends to comment on the Gospels ought to be prepared to give an explanation of all such passages as these. The plain truth is, that he who reads the Gospels most attentively, finds in them most to wonder at: for they are full of difficulties; not only obvious ones, (like the present,) but unexpected difficulties also. Now, a Commentary may well be required to be more or less satisfactory in discussing hard passages which involve *Doctrine*; to cause, in the statement of Doctrine, Holy Men to be spoken plainly in all ages; and the *Tradition* of the Church, (as it is called,) has been uniform from the very beginning. Difficult idioms ought to be explained; and the Reader (if he be curious in such matters) has further a right to require information in matters of History, Chronology, and Geography; since a little learning of the most ordinary kind, will, for the most part, supply all the help required. Above all, does it seem to be the business of Notes to call attention to precious sayings which might else escape notice: to gather lessons of Divine Wisdom from the prominent facts and allusions of the SPIRIT: by this means the Word of God becomes the Bread of Life,—the very food and support of the Soul. But *there* the skill of the Commentator is wanted. No one so curious as *he* to have the hidden meanings of the Gospel explained to him: but he is as if a thick curtain spread over many of them, which no one yet has been enabled to remove.

That many things *yet* remain to be discovered in Holy Scripture, he firmly believes. That grounds of great probability can be offered for a guess, even at such places as the present, he knows. But after he has said this, he is glad to confess his own great ignorance.

He would fain be permitted, however, to add, —that there are things far better worth knowing than the present, which will be revealed to readers of Scripture with no reading and little wit; who yet study the Book of Life with pure hearts, supremely desirous of discerning God in His Word.

And lastly, let it be stated that we should read the Gospels rather in order to feed upon their clear statements than to perplex ourselves with their dark places. It is a great snare of Satan to make men wonder and cavil where they ought to believe and obey. “While others *dispute*,” (says the great Father of the Western Church,) “be it *mine to adore*.”

- 20 And JESUS saith unto him, The Foxes have holes, and the Birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay *His* Head.

Words which we have read, and heard repeated, till they have perhaps ceased to move us: yet, inexpressibly affecting they surely are, on the lips of the Eternal SON,—the WORD “made flesh”

..... What a history do they discover, of weary days, and shelterless nights:—of houseless wanderings, and scanty supplies of food! The Chief Shepherd might have said with far more truth than Jacob, (who was but a feeble type of *Him*,) —“In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night: and my sleep departed from mine eyes<sup>1</sup>.”

The title “Son of Man” is applied to our LORD by Himself in the Gospels, frequently: by His Apostles, never. He who was in the highest sense the SON of GOD,—and became the Son of Man, only ‘for us men and for our Salvation,’—seems to have called Himself by this name in order to give His hearers to understand that it was He of whom the prophet Daniel spoke, in Daniel vii. 13. That the Jews understood the title, as denoting the MESSIAH, appears from St. John xii. 34,—where our LORD’s words at the Feast of Tabernacles<sup>m</sup> are alluded to. He is found to have applied to himself the prophecy of Daniel, just quoted, on two occasions: namely, in St. Matthew xxiv. 30, and xxvi. 64. See the second note on St. John . 27.

And another of His Disciples said unto Him, LORD, suffer me first to go and bury my Father.

Here was a Disciple who drew back; and we shall find, in the next verse, that our SAVIOUR

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxxi. 40.

<sup>m</sup> St. John viii. 28.



urged Him forward. We have just witnessed a contrary spectacle: one who was for pressing forward, but whom our LORD kept back. . . . He has different ways of dealing with us, according to our different dispositions. The timid need reproof and encouragement,—the impetuous must be made to count the cost.

- 22 But JESUS said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead.

There is some uncertainty as to the exact meaning of this saying, and others like it, in the Gospels; and so long as that is the case, it is safer to gather the *general* lesson which they embody,—the teaching which they were certainly intended to convey to *ourselves*,—than to dispute about their precise meaning in the ears of the Disciples who heard them. That those who are living in a state of Sin, are *dead* in God's sight, we know from such passages as St. John v. 25. Rom. v. 14: vi. 11, 13: Ephes. ii. 1, 5. Colossians ii. 13. 1 Timothy v. 6. Rev. iii. 1, &c. It may therefore be, that this Disciple understood our LORD's words to signify, 'Let those who are spiritually dead *so* excuse,—*so* employ themselves.' But be this as it may, it is clear that CHRIST reproved the man for inventing delays,—when he should have simply followed the footsteps of the SAVIOUR. And this is ever the way with all of us. We profess love, and willingness, and good intentions: but there is always *something* which we think must be done

*first.* We stand equally in need, therefore, of the reproof here recorded : and *that* may be the chief reason why it *is* recorded.

And when He was entered into a ship, 23  
His Disciples followed Him.

Let us be well persuaded that *that* Ship, and its little company,—with their LORD in the midst of them,—exhibits a lively type or emblem of the Christian Church : vexed with many storms,—yet safe, because blessed with the presence of CHRIST.

And, behold, there arose a great Tempest 24  
in the Sea, insomuch that the Ship was covered with the waves :

That which happens to the body, befalls each of the members likewise. “Deep calleth unto deep,” says the Psalmist. “All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me.” “Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves.” But to be tost by the billows is no proof of desertion, or even of danger.

but He was asleep.

The ship,—*covered with waves* ; and CHRIST in the ship,—*asleep* ! . . . . How true a picture of the Church's fortunes ! How true a picture of the Church at *this*,—at *all* times ! . . . . Is He therefore unconscious of the danger, because He is

▪ Ps. xlii. 7.

• Ps. lxxxviii. 7.

20      AND HIS DISCIPLES came to *Him*, and  
Him, saying, LORD, save us : we peri

As if the ship *could* perish which  
CHRIST ! And yet this faithless conduc  
Disciples is ours at all times ! Unless we  
and wonders we will not believe\*. The l  
of the Disciples is that of the Church in  
of danger,—slow of heart to believe Go  
mises\*, and impatient of the storm. “  
why sleepest Thou, O LORD ? Arise, cas  
off for ever. Wherefore hidest Thou Thy

26      And He saith unto them, Why  
fearful, O ye of little faith ? Then, H  
and rebuked the Winds and the Sea :

Observe, that He first rebuked *them*  
wards the sea. With his head yet reclin

gered their safety far more than the heaving billows of the Lake.

and there was a great calm.

"And so, in the soul, when all within is full of confusion and noise,—the heart working like a troubled sea, and finding no rest, either from its own persuasions, or the most skilful speeches of others; but, amidst all, likely to be swallowed up or split in pieces;—then, one word from CHRIST's mouth quiets all presently, and makes the soul calmer and smoother than the stillest water in the fairest day." The words are Leighton's.

"A great calm!"—If the Miracles of our LORD have a typical and prophetic character, (as many of them doubtless have,) how full of deep and mysterious meaning, how full of comfort to troubled hearts,—are these few words! That ship and its little company, (among whom CHRIST was,) proves the emblem of the Ark of CHRIST's Church;—the stormy waters set forth the vexations of our present restless and unquiet life. What then is this mention of "a great calm," but a prophecy of what will be hereafter; when 'the raves of this troublesome world' shall have been exchanged for "a sea of glass, like unto crystal"; and the present shifting scene, for that better land where "the wicked cease from troubling, and . . . the weary be at rest?"

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. ix. 6.*

<sup>2</sup> *Job iii. 17.*

- 27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him !

‘Man’ should be in italics,—for the word does not occur in the original. “Who?” “What manner of [being]?” is the question in all the three Gospels.

Not that they doubted who He was, or questioned His Divinity ; but because so stupendous an act of power took them quite by surprise. They had seen Him cast out devils and cure diseases ; they had even known the elements, in silent subjection to His sway, change their very nature ; as when the water, at Cana’s feast, became wine. But it was something quite strange and new to see the mad winds chained up at His rebuke ; and the waves,—which, a moment before threatened to cover them,—stand motionless at His word.

- 28 And when He was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes,

Our LORD had now crossed the Lake, and set foot on the Eastern Coast. The Country of the Gergesenes was so called from the city of Gergesa, which lay there. Hard by, was the city of Gadara. Hence, the same district is called ‘the Country of the *Gadarenes*’ by St. Mark (v. 1), and St. Luke (viii. 26). See the last note on St. Matthew iv.

A wondrous narrative follows,—extending to the end of the present chapter. St. Mark and

St. Luke have delivered the incident so much more fully than St. Matthew, that the reader is referred to the notes on those Gospels,—namely, St. Mark v: 1 to 20, and St. Luke viii. 26 to 40,—for many remarks on the entire miracle which cannot be introduced with equal fitness in this place.

there met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

Take notice that these unclean spirits loved to haunt the tombs,—places which it was accounted pollution even to touch. See Numbers xix. 16; and consider St. Matthew xxiii. 27. To “remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments,” and “eat swine’s flesh,”—had been, long before, pointed out by the Prophet, as marks of a people hateful in God’s sight. The “tombs” spoken of resembled our *vaults* rather than ordinary graves: being recesses in the rock, whether natural or artificial; large enough to contain many persons.

And, behold, they cried out, saying, 29  
What have we to do with Thee, JESUS, Thou  
SON of GOD?

Here was a full confession of our SAVIOUR’S Godhead. “The devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that *Faith without Works is dead*?”

† Isaiah lxx. 4.

‡ St. James ii. 19, 20.

Observe, that ever after the Temptation, the Devils *knew* CHRIST. Compare St. Luke iv. 34 and 41, and see the note on the former place.

Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?

Compare St. Luke iv. 34. See also, the note on St. Luke viii. 31. How awful, and how terrible are these glimpses at the unseen World, and the history of the devils! The Human Race had been for so long a time expecting Salvation,—the evil angels, Punishment<sup>a</sup>. And the very *sight* of the Holy One is torture to them,—the anticipation of their sentence!

For there will come a day, "*a time*," as these words remind us, when our SAVIOUR CHRIST, putting "all enemies under His feet<sup>b</sup>," shall bring to judgment the evil angels also<sup>c</sup>. They already know their sentence; and see, by anticipation, "the smoke of their *torment* ascending up for ever and ever<sup>d</sup>."

30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

St. Mark informs us that they were about two thousand<sup>e</sup>. Take note that, according to the Law, these creatures were unclean. See Leviticus

<sup>a</sup> 2 St. Pet. ii. 4. St. Jude, ver. 6.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 25.

<sup>c</sup> Compare 1 Cor. vi. 3. <sup>d</sup> Rev. xiv. 11. <sup>e</sup> St. Mark v. 13.

xi. 8, compared with Deut. xiv. 8. Also Isaiah lvi. 17.

So the devils besought Him, saying, If<sup>31</sup> Thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

See what is said on St. Mark v. 12: and take notice that the devils promised themselves a gratification most nearly resembling *that* which they had till now enjoyed, by being permitted to take up their abode in the bodies of the most filthy of animals!

And He said unto them, Go.

32

Observe, that our LORD does not *send* the devils into the swine. He does but permit them to enter the herd of unclean creatures.

And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

Whether this was *the intention* of the devils, or not, does not appear. It may very well have been that the herd,—frenzied by the strange power which suddenly possessed them,—rushed over the cliff; unconscious that they were thereby defeating the object of their invaders. But see the *second note* on St. Mark v. 13.



If *so* it were, we should be reminded by this incident of the many occasions when the most bitter malice, and most exceeding cunning, are found to have out-witted and over-reached themselves. Consider St. Matthew ii. 7, 8, &c.

- 33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed  
 34 of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet JESUS: and when they saw Him, they besought *Him* that He would depart out of their coasts.

So true was that saying of the prophet,—  
*“When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him!”*

What a picture is here presented to us! The inhabitants of a whole city imploring the SAVIOUR of the World to “depart out of their coasts!” Yet had He come among them as a Benefactor; and delivered them from a terrible pest,—namely, the presence of a whole Legion<sup>s</sup> of devils; whose violence was such, that “no man might pass by that way,” (ver. 28.) Thus He, whose baby-limbs were laid in a Manger, because there was no room for Him in the Inn<sup>h</sup>:—whose Infancy was nursed in Egypt, because the savage King of Judæa sought His Life<sup>i</sup>:—who was forced to save Himself by flight, from the murderous hands of

<sup>f</sup> Isaiah liii. 2.

<sup>g</sup> St. Mark v. 9.

<sup>h</sup> St. Luke ii. 7.

<sup>i</sup> St. Matth. ii. 13, 14.

His own fellow-townsmen<sup>k</sup>,—and many a time was obliged to go from place to place in order to escape the violence of the very nation He came to save<sup>l</sup>:—who was at last betrayed by His Friend, —mocked, scourged, smitten, crowned with thorns, spitted on and Crucified: He, in the ordinary events of His every-day Life, experienced nothing but neglect, unkindness, and ingratitude. He walked the earth's surface, without a place, 'where to lay His head<sup>m</sup>.' Men,—“*when they saw Him*,—besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.”

<sup>k</sup> St. Luke iv. 29, 30.

<sup>l</sup> St. John viii. 59: x. 31 and 39: xi. 53, 54, &c.

<sup>m</sup> See above ver. 20.

## **The Prayer.**

**G**RANT, O LORD, we beseech Thee  
the course of this World may be so  
ably ordered by Thy governance, that  
Church may joyfully serve Thee in all  
quietness ; through **JESUS CHRIST** our  
Amen.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE NINTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

2 CHRIST curing one sick of the palsy, 9 calleth Matthew from the receipt of custom, 10 eateth with Publicans and Sinners, 14 defendeth His Disciples for not fasting, 20 cureth the bloody issue, 23 raiseth from death Jairus daughter, 27 giveth sight to two blind men, 82 healeth a dumb man possessed of a devil, 36 and hath compassion of the multitude.

IX. AND He entered into a ship, and <sup>1</sup> passed over, and came into His own City.

Our Blessed LORD, having wrought the great miracle in the country of the Gergesenes, (described in the former chapter,) entered again into *the ship*, and crossed over to the Western shore of the Lake.

“He who measures the waters in the hollow of His hand, and commands them <sup>a</sup>,” says Leighton, “is ferried over in some boat or small vessel !”

“His own *Country*,” was Nazareth <sup>b</sup>: “His own *City*,” was Capernaum. See St. Mark ii. 1. —One of the ancients remarks beautifully,—“The

<sup>a</sup> St. Matthew viii. 26.    <sup>b</sup> Compare St. Luke iv. 16 and 23, 24.

CREATOR of all things, the LORD of the V when He had, for our sakes, straitened H in the bonds of our flesh,—began to hav own country, as a man; began to be a citi Judæa, and to have Parents, (though Him Parent of all!) in order that Affection attach to Him those whom Fear had separa

A most interesting narrative follows, cure of the Paralytic, borne of four. St. Ma however, relates this miracle so concisely his narrative would be scarcely intelligible out the help of the next two Evangelists. reader is accordingly referred to St. Mark's pel,—chap. ii. 1 to 12; and to St. Luke v. 26, and to the notes on both places, for f information concerning this miracle.

- 2 And, behold, they brought to Him a sick of the palsy,

The reader is referred to a long note Mark ii. 3.

lying on a bed.

But St. Mark<sup>c</sup> and St. Luke<sup>d</sup> furnish more particulars; as, that "They sought to bring him in, and lay him before Him. when they could not find by what way they bring him in, because of the multitude, the upon the housetop, and uncovered the roof

<sup>c</sup> St. Mark ii. 4.

<sup>d</sup> St. Luke v. 1

He was : and when they had broken it up, they set him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before JESUS." This was indeed a surprising act : wherefore the Evangelist proceeds,—

And JESUS seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy ; Son, be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee.

The Reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark ii. 5.

"It is needless," says Leighton, "to dispute whether one may be benefited by another's Faith. Surely, much may be done by it. Thus, it may bring, and present a person ; may recommend, may pray for him ; and may be respected in the grant of Mercy,—not only in things temporal, but in spiritual matters also. And yet 'The Just' lives only *by his own Faith*<sup>e</sup>,—which Faith, no doubt, this poor man had. For the word "*their*," excludes not, but rather includes, the sick man's,—who, no doubt, consented to the course they were pursuing, and shared their confidence."

And, behold, certain of the Scribes said <sup>3</sup> within themselves, This *man* blasphemeth.

St. Matthew tells us not *what* Scribes these

\* Habakkuk ii. 4,—quoted by St. Paul three times : Romans i. 17, Gal. iii. 11, Hebrews x. 38.

were. To understand the Evangelist's meaning, see St. Mark ii. 6 : but St. Luke it is,—v. 17,—who makes the matter clearest of all.

"It is good," says Leighton, "to be in believing people's company<sup>f</sup>. Another person, a city, a society, may fare the better for the faith of an Individual<sup>g</sup>. Often, *one* who prays in a family, averts judgments, and draws down blessings upon the whole<sup>h</sup>."

See the notes on St. Mark ii. 5, 6, and 7.

4 And JESUS knowing their thoughts said,  
Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts ?

"This," says Leighton, "without anything further, was enough to prove His Divine power. Oh, that this truth were ever before us, that all our thoughts are under His eye ! If we knew that they were under the eye of some grave, wise man,—how wary and choice should we be of them ! And shall we have less regard to our holiest and wisest LORD,—to whom they are all naked and open ?"

"*Wherefore* think ye evil in your hearts?"—"There was *no* reason in the thing ; but the truth was,—their hearts were evil ; and so was everything which came out of them. An evil

<sup>f</sup> Compare Genesis xviii. 32.

<sup>g</sup> See the notes on the first part of St. Luke v. 6.

<sup>h</sup> See St. James v. 16—and the places referred to in the margin of a reference Bible.

heart is an incessant forge of evil thoughts . . . .  
 Hence, that excellent advice of Solomon, 'Keep  
 thy heart with all diligence<sup>1</sup>.' To amend some  
 evil customs, without the renewing of the heart,  
 but to lop the branches that will grow again.  
 But a holy heart meditates on holy things; is  
 still in Heaven; is all reverence towards God,—  
 all meekness and Charity towards man."

See the notes on St. Mark ii. 8.

For whether is easier, to say, *Thy sins be* <sup>5</sup>  
 forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

That is,—Which of the two is the safer thing  
 to say? Which claim is more easily set up;—  
 the power to forgive Sin,—or the power to restore  
 a palsied body to strength and motion?

But that ye may know that the Son of <sup>6</sup>  
 Man hath power on Earth to forgive sins,  
 when saith He to the sick of the palsy,)   
 rise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine  
 house.

"Power on Earth," as opposed to "Power in  
 heaven." See the note on St. Mark ii. 10.

Thereby our SAVIOUR proved the reality of His  
 miracle, taking away from His enemies all pre-  
 nce that it was any illusion. He also thereby  
 showed them that He had not only healed this  
 poor sufferer, but had given him *strength* as well.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. iv. 23.



But the deepest truth He shewed, and that which it most concerns *us* to observe, was, that He had power not only to turn away souls from sin; but to give them strength afterwards to walk in the way of His Law. “I will run the way of Thy Commandments,” says the Psalmist,—“when Thou hast set my heart at liberty<sup>k</sup>.”

- 7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

Our LORD proves what is invisible by what is visible. So he ever doth! He explains what is hard *indeed*, by what is comparatively easy. And yet, His enemies, in their folly, think that He is doing the very contrary of this.—See the note on St. Mark ii. 9.

- 8 But when the multitudes saw *it*, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

The Reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark ii. 11, 13.

- 9 And as JESUS passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom :

“He staid no long time upon Earth, but He lost no part of that time. Every step, to us is a wonder of Goodness! And here is a cure which the Evangelist relates as done upon himself, which

<sup>k</sup> Psalm cxix. 32.

was not less, if not more wonderful than that performed upon the paralytic man: done as easily and quickly, and by the same means,—a word spoken!”

“*A man named Matthew.*” How humble and simple a way of speaking of himself! . . . Take notice, that the other Evangelists<sup>1</sup> call him *Levi*,—as the more honourable appellation, by which he was known to his brethren of the commonwealth of Israel. Observe also, that He who “*saw* . . . . Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother;” “and, going on from thence, *saw* other two brethren<sup>m</sup>;”—who also “*saw*” Nathanael sitting under the fig-tree<sup>n</sup>, now “*saw* a man named Matthew;” and called him. “He spies us out,” says a good man, “when we think of nothing less.” Notice the language of St. Luke xxi. 2.

and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him.

So simply does St. Matthew relate his own call to Apostleship! He has reserved the account till now, in order that he may relate it in connexion with the Feast which he made to his Divine Master; but, in reality, it happened long before. The Twelve had all been called before the Sermon on the Mount,—as appears from St. Luke vi. 15, compared with ver. 20 of the same chapter.

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark ii. 14, and St. Luke v. 27.

<sup>m</sup> St. Matthew iv. 18, 21.

<sup>n</sup> St. John i. 48.

Concerning the call of St. Matthew, see the note on St. Mark ii. 14.

The reader is further referred to a not latter part of St. Matthew iv. 21.

The ancients are fond of reminding us Apostle and Evangelist was called from th of custom to be entrusted with a more 'pound,' and ten more precious 'talents.'

- 10 And it came to pass, as JESUS sat in the house,

"In *the* house:"—that is, *St. Matthew* "the house" so well known to himself thus that men ever speak of what is tl Compare St. Mark i. 11, and see the not

But St. Mark, fearing lest the Ev meaning might not be understood, se Jesus sat at meat in *his* house<sup>o</sup>;" and to put the matter out of all doubt, says, *own* house<sup>p</sup>."

behold, many Publicans and sinne and sat down with Him and His Dis

Concerning "publicans and sinners," note on St. Mark ii. 15. To eat with sons, was deemed a pollution; whence it

- 11 And when the Pharisees saw *it*, 1  
unto His Disciples, Why eateth yc  
12 ter with Publicans and Sinners? E

• St. Mark ii. 15.

• St. Luke

JESUS heard *that*, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick.

The Reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark ii. 16, 17, for some remarks on these words.

But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, 13  
I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice :

St. Matthew, addressing his Gospel especially to readers of his own nation, brings forward many more citations of the Old Testament Scriptures than the other Evangelists. Consider chap. i. 23 : ii. 15, 23 : iv. 15, 16 : viii. 17, &c.—The place here quoted from Hosea vi. 6, is quoted again in chap. xii. 7 ; and is clearly not intended to disparage Sacrifice ; but only to exalt Mercy above it. It runs as follows,—“ I desired Mercy and not Sacrifice ; and the knowledge of God *more than* burnt offerings<sup>1</sup>, ”—where the latter clause of the sentence explains the former. For (in the words of an old English Archbishop,)—“ God does not condemn Sacrifice, but *Sacrifice without Mercy*” . . . . This is one of the many places where the Law contains a foretaste of the Gospel. Such are also 1 Samuel xv. 22. Isaiah i. 11 to 17 : lviii. 4 to 7. Micah vi. 6 to 8, &c.

Concerning the precept here conveyed, it has been well remarked by a good man, that—“ multiplying external sacrifices is no proof of pro-

<sup>1</sup> Hosea vi. 6.

gress in holiness; but proficiency in Mercy, is always so."

for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

"Art thou an eminent sinner?" asks Leighton, "then come to Him, for He came to thee. It is such that He comes to seek. They are the very objects of His Grace. He had nothing else to do in the World, but to save such. He came on purpose for their sakes. His very Name tells it: 'He shall be called JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins.' Were it not strange if one should say, I am sick, very sick, therefore I will not address the Physician? And to say, I am a sinner, and a great one, therefore I dare not go to the SAVIOUR of sinners,—would be equally strange."

'Not the righteous, *but* sinners:' and so, just before, 'Not Sacrifice, *but* Mercy.' Compare Proverbs viii. 10. Joel ii. 13. St. Mark ix. 37. St. Luke x. 20. St. John iii. 17: v. 30: vi. 27: vii. 16: ix. 3: xii. 44, 47: xiv. 24. Acts v. 4: Romans ii. 13: 1 Cor. vii. 10. 1 St. John iii. 18.—In all these places, the meaning seems to be *Not so much* the one, *as* the other: *Rather* the one, *than* the other: *Not only* the one, *but also* the other.

- 14 Then came to Him the Disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy Disciples fast not?

† St. Matthew i. 21.

And JESUS said unto them, Can the child- 15  
 en of the bridechamber mourn, as long as  
 he Bridegroom is with them? but the days  
 will come, when the Bridegroom shall be  
 taken from them, and then shall they fast.

Take notice that our LORD here utters a great  
 prophecy,—and makes one of the earliest allusions  
 to His own approaching Death.

See the notes on St. Mark ii. 18, 19, 20; also  
 on St. Luke v. 35, for several remarks on the pre-  
 ceding verses.

No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto 16  
 an old garment, for that which is put in to  
 fill it up taketh from the garment, and the  
 rent is made worse. Neither do men put 17  
 new wine into old bottles: else the bottles  
 break, and the wine runneth out, and the  
 bottles perish: but they put new wine into  
 new bottles, and both are preserved.

The reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark  
 i. 21, 22. Consider also St. Luke v. 39, and the  
 note there.

While He spake these things unto them, 18  
 behold, there came a certain Ruler,

St. Matthew relates the raising of Jairus's daugh-  
 ter more concisely, by far, than either St. Mark or  
 St. Luke. For example, he tells us neither the  
*name of the Father*,—nor what kind of "Ruler"

he was. He describes also, in the very briefest manner, the wondrous miracle which our SAVIOUR performed by the way, on the Woman with the issue of blood,—verses 20 to 22.

The Reader is therefore referred to the notes on St. Mark v. 22 to 43, for the remarks which would be less conveniently offered here. See also the notes on St. Luke viii. 41 to 56.

and worshipped Him, saying, My Daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Thy Hand upon her, and she shall live.

Rather,—“My Daughter is by this time, dead;”—“must be dead by this time.” The Father had left his child in the very agony of death,—as the words of St. Mark v. 23, and the subsequent course of the History, (St. Mark v. 35,) clearly prove.

19 And JESUS arose, and followed him, and so *did* His Disciples.

20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind *Him*, and touched the hem of His garment:

What is here called a “hem,” (and is translated “border,” in St. Luke viii. 44,) is called a “*fringe*” in Numbers xv. 38 and 39;—where the divine command is recorded, in virtue whereof this ornament was worn by members of the Jewish nation. See the place. It is probable that this afflicted

creature laid her hand on the "ribband of blue" which edged the outer garment of the SAVIOUR of the World, as considering that it possessed a peculiar sanctity.

See the note on St. Matt. xxiii. 5.

Observe, that the touch of such an one brought defilement<sup>a</sup>; which may, partly, have been the cause of her timid approach. But see the notes on St. Mark i. 41, and on the last half of St. Luke v. 13.

for she said within herself, If I may but 21 touch His garment, I shall be whole.

She believed with her heart: she confessed with her lips<sup>t</sup>: she touched with her hand. By Faith, —Word,—and Deed, Salvation is obtained. St. Mark relates how immediate was her cure:—v. 29 to 32.

But JESUS turned Him about, and when 22 He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

Which means not the hour when "JESUS turned Him about,"—but the hour, or rather the instant, in which the afflicted woman touched His garment.

The entire incident is related with surprising conciseness by the present Evangelist. The Reader

<sup>a</sup> *Leviticus xv. 27 to 29.*

<sup>t</sup> *Rom. x. 9 and 10.*



has been already referred to the Gospels of St. Mark,—v. 22 to 43; and St. Luke,—viii. 41 to 56.

- 23 And when Jesus came into the Ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

The house was full of hired mourners<sup>u</sup>, and pipers, who, according to the Jewish custom played mournful music,—as an expression of sorrow for the departed. There is an allusion to this in Jeremiah xlviii. 36.

- 24 He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn.

Our SAVIOUR CHRIST thereby disarms Death of its terrors, reminding us that He is “the God of the living; for all live unto Him<sup>x</sup>.”

See the note on St. Mark v. 39; and consider the following texts: 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14, 15. 1 Cor. xv. 6, 51.

- 25 But when the people were put forth, He went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

By His three miraculous acts of raising the dead, our Blessed LORD displayed before men's eyes the Doctrine of the Resurrection: teaching, at the same time, that *Himself* is “the Resurrection and the Life<sup>y</sup>.”

<sup>u</sup> See the note on St. Mark v. 38.

<sup>x</sup> St. Luke xx. 38.

<sup>y</sup> St. John xi. 25.

It has been also supposed that He thereby mystically set forth the purpose of His coming; which was, to raise up those who were dead in sins to a life of Righteousness. And such, indeed, is the frequent language of the SPIRIT; as when it is said,—“God, who is rich in Mercy, . . . when we were *dead in sins*, hath quickened us, . . . and raised us up<sup>2</sup>.” And again,—“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from *the dead*, and CHRIST shall give thee light<sup>3</sup>.” Consider also such texts as the following, St. Matt. viii. 22. St. Luke xv. 24, 32. 1 Tim. v. 6. Coloss. ii. 13. Rev. iii. 1, &c.

It has been further pointed out, and with remarkable truth, that the three cases of raising the dead, recorded in the Gospels, aptly set forth three different conditions of the human soul, from which it may be raised by the quickening voice of CHRIST. It has either just sunk into Sin,—of which the present miracle would be typical: or its restoration may seem the more hopeless, from its having been already some time in that case,—of which the Widow of Nain's Son, on his way to burial, would be a lively figure;—or it may be, to all appearance, hopelessly lost,—of which Lazarus, who had lain four days in the grave, would be the sad type. Consider St. John v. 24, 25; and the note on the latter verse.

And the fame hereof went abroad into all 26 that land.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. ii. 4, 5, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ephes. v. 14.

We are next presented with two mighty miracles,—indicative, alike, of the days of the Gospel; concerning which, it had been said,—“Then the eyes of *the blind* shall be opened, . . . and the tongue of *the dumb* shall sing<sup>b</sup>.”—The former of these two miracles,—(whereby our LORD restored to sight two blind men in the House,)—is peculiar to the present Gospel: and seems to have immediately followed the transaction last related. It is the first miracle performed on the blind, described in the Gospels;—the others will be found in St. Matthew xii. 22: xx. 30 to 34: St. Mark viii. 22 to 26; and St. John ix. 1 to 7. See also St. Matthew xxi. 14. And take notice, that all such acts were but symbolical of the far higher purpose with which our SAVIOUR came into the World,—namely, to open the eyes of them whom Sin had blinded; and who, in a far deeper sense, are described in Scripture as walking in darkness,—sitting in the very shadow of Death. Consider the following texts:—Isaiah ix. 2: xlii. 7: xlix. 9. St. John ix. 39 to 41, &c. Ephes. v. 8, 14. Rev. iii. 17, 18. . . . How fitting then, was it, that He who opened the eyes of the blind, should have been called—“The LIGHT of the World<sup>c</sup>!”

- 27 And when JESUS departed thence, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, *Thou Son of David*, have mercy on us.

<sup>b</sup> Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.

<sup>c</sup> St. John viii. 12, &c.

A cry which we make-our own, daily, in the suffrages at the end of the Litany!

The same appellation is found on the lips of the Woman of Canaan, in chap. xv. 22; and it is heard from the two other blind men, at Jericho, in chap. xx. 30, 31:—a sufficient proof of the popular belief that “CHRIST cometh of the seed of David<sup>d</sup>,” as well as of the conviction of these afflicted persons, that JESUS of Nazareth was He. Compare chap. xii. 23: xxi. 9 and 15. Also, i. 1.

It seems, then, that these two persons followed our SAVIOUR, with loud cries; but that our LORD pursued His way to the House, as if regardless of their need. Compare with this, our LORD's treatment of the woman of Canaan<sup>e</sup>.

And when He was come into the house, 28 the blind men came to Him:

That is, they followed our Blessed SAVIOUR into the house which He inhabited at Capernaum; mentioned in chap. xiii. 1, 36, &c.: probably, Simon Peter's. Our SAVIOUR wrought His miracles in all places,—in the street, and in the house; amid festivity and beside the grave; in crowds and before few persons; in the Synagogue, and in the private chamber,—as if to remind us that we are in every place alike objects of His Love; and may every where become the objects of His Mercy.

<sup>d</sup> St. John vii. 42.

<sup>e</sup> St. Matthew xv. 22, 23, compared with St. Mark vii. 24.

## A PLAIN COMMENTARY

Take notice, that these men had belie<sup>ving</sup> only: for the Voice of CHRIST, & report of Him, was all that can have reached them. They had *seen* no wonder wrought by His power, as yet, beheld the Majesty of His Person. Their case, therefore, in some respects, resembles our own . . . . But "Blessed are they *that have believed*." And how reproof was administered by their Faith to those stiff-necked people who had so long believed the Miracles of CHRIST in vain!

and JESUS saith unto them, Believe that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, LORD.

Not that our LORD *required* this as a testimony, "He needed not that any should testify of Him, for He knew what was in Man's heart." But He asked the question, in order to draw from them a confession of their Faith; "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth, confession is made unto Salvation." Perhaps, also, this may have been done for the example of some who were present. See the note on Mark v. 9; and on the latter part of ver.

29 Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

The result proved their faith to be

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 29.      <sup>2</sup> St. John ii. 25.      <sup>3</sup> Rom.

earnest and sincere. And let it here once more be noted that the measure of Faith is ever the measure of Blessedness. Strange to say, it is this only which prescribes a limit to Divine Love! Compare St. Matthew xiii. 58, with St. Mark vi. 5; and consider Acts xiv. 9. See also the first note on the last part of St. Matth. viii. 3.

. Our LORD's action on this occasion, was repeated in the case of the two blind men at Jericho<sup>1</sup>; while His words closely resemble those which He addressed to the Centurion at Capernaum,—chap. viii. 13; where see the note.

And their eyes were opened;

30

“I will give Thee,” saith ALMIGHTY GOD, “to open the blind eyes; to bring out the prisoners from the prison; and them that sit in darkness, out of the prison-house<sup>1</sup>.” Compare the last words of Isaiah lxi. 1, with the last words of St. Luke iv. 18.

And JESUS straitly charged them, saying, See *that* no man know *it*.

With the injunction which our LORD proceeded to deliver, compare what He said to the Leper, in St. Mark i. 44: and to the deaf man with an impediment in his speech, in St. Mark vii. 36. See also, the first note on St. Matthew viii. 4; and the notes on St. Mark i. 44, 45.

Holy Scripture is wondrous brief at all times.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xx. 34.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xlii. 7.

To fill up the sketch, is ever left for ourselves. Do but think of the wondrous scene which must have followed an incident like this! The men,—rewarded for their Faith to the utmost extent of their desires,—suddenly find themselves face to face with their Benefactor. What must have been their surprise, their joy, their gratitude, their awe! “I have heard of Thee” (say they) “with the hearing of the ear; but now,—mine eye *seeth* Thee!”

The rapture of prisoners set free from a gloomy prison-house, must have been theirs: and it seems to have been excessive,—for see the next verse, and the note upon it.

- 31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country.

There had been perfect Faith, therefore; but there was not perfect Obedience. The consequence here described is found to have also ensued upon all the occasions referred to in the foregoing note: and yet, from the remarkable word which the Evangelist uses, (and which we translate ‘straitly charged,’) it would appear that these men were violating a most earnest, emphatic command. The word recurs in St. Mark i. 43; and besides, only in St. Mark xiv. 5, and St. John xi. 33, 38.

It had been foretold by the Prophet, that, in the days of MESSIAH, not only should “the eyes of the blind be opened,” but “the *tongue of the*

<sup>1</sup> Job xlii. 5.

*lumb* should sing<sup>1</sup>." A miracle performed on a *lumb* person comes next.

As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

Observe how closely this miracle follows on the heels of the other. A bloody issue,—Death,—blind eyes,—and dumb lips: what an assemblage of marvels, in close succession, does one short chapter contain!

The present appears to have been a very extraordinary display of Almighty Power: but it is recorded with singular brevity. Observe that the sufferer was "brought" to CHRIST. He was possessed by what is called in St. Mark ix. 17, "*a dumb spirit*."

And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

It would appear, from this mention of the multitudes, that our SAVIOUR did not work this miracle, like the preceding, privately, and in the house.

We read here of no questioning on the part of our LORD: no act of Faith on the part of the sufferer. The Great Physician simply heals the afflicted person whom another brings. And it is because the man was the sport of an evil spirit's

<sup>1</sup> *Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.*



malice,—who had bound up his will, and left him scarcely, (if at all,) responsible for his actions.—The same course was pursued by our LORD on all similar occasions.

- 34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the Prince of the devils.

We shall find the same blasphemous charge brought against our LORD, and by the same persons, in chap. xii. 24,—on the occasion of His casting out the devil from the man possessed, blind and dumb. See the note on St. Mark iii. 22.

Observe the last resource of unbelief. As long as the Pharisees can *deny* our LORD's miracles, they do so. See St. John ix. 18. When denial is simply impossible, they set about *explaining them away*. And do we not witness the same thing at the present day among ourselves?

- 35 And JESUS went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Thus briefly, once more, does the Evangelist describe our LORD's second great Ministerial Journey!—He repeats almost the very words which he had used to describe the former one,—in chap. iv. 23; whither the Reader is referred.

The Shepherd and Bishop of Souls thus went

er "the lost sheep of the House of Israel." A  
 rning to us, that *we* also must "go about,"—  
*after* that which has gone astray, and seek to  
 cover that which is lost.

St. Peter, summing up in a single sentence the  
 istory of our SAVIOUR'S Life, uses words ad-  
 irably descriptive of what is intimated in this  
 ace: namely,—“How GOD anointed JESUS of  
 azareth with the HOLY GHOST and with Power:  
 io *went about doing good, and healing all that*  
*re oppressed of the Devil; for God was with*  
 im<sup>m</sup>.”

But when He saw the multitudes, He was 36  
 oved with compassion on them, because  
 ey fainted, and were scattered abroad, as  
 eep having no Shepherd.

Marvellous is the constancy of Holy Scripture.  
 his image will be found to recur in Numbers  
 vii. 17: 1 Kings xxii. 17: Jeremiah xxiii. 1 to  
 and l. 6: Ezekiel xxxiv. 5, 6, &c. . . These poor  
 eep, who had followed our Blessed LORD on the  
 asion mentioned in the last verse, were still  
 nging on the Divine footsteps of their Benefac-  
 r; exhausted in body, and scattered from their  
 mes.

Then saith He unto His Disciples, The 37  
 arvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers  
 e few;

<sup>m</sup> Acts x. 38.

Compare St. John iv. 35, and the note there.

- 38 pray ye therefore the LORD of the Harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His Harvest.

This, in effect, we do daily ; when we say "Thy Kingdom come."—Compare St. Matthew xiii. 30.

Verses 37, 38 of this Gospel,—which describe what our LORD said, on sending forth His Twelve Apostles to preach,—recur, word for word, in St. Luke x. 2 ; and are found to have been spoken also at the sending out of the Seventy Disciples.

## The Prayer.

ALMIGHTY God, we beseech Thee graciously to behold this Thy Family, for which our LORD JESUS CHRIST was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the Cross ; who now liveth and reigneth with Thee and the HOLY GHOST, ever one God, World without end. Amen.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TENTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

1 CHRIST sendeth out His twelve Apostles, enabling them with power to do miracles, 5 giveth them their Charge, teacheth them, 16 comforteth them against persecutions: 40 and promiseth a blessing to those that receive them.

X. AND when He had called unto Him His twelve Disciples, He gave them power *against* unclean Spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

The concluding verses of the preceding chapter<sup>a</sup> prepare the Reader for this famous incident, —namely, the first sending forth of the Twelve Apostles, armed with miraculous powers which had been immediately delegated to them by their LORD. St. Matthew, because he had not yet given their names, proceeds to recount them. The Reader is requested to refer to what has been already remarked on this subject in the note on St. Mark iii. 14, 15.

Now the names of the twelve Apostles 2

<sup>a</sup> St. Matthew ix. 36 to 38.

are these; the first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the*  
 3 son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphæus and Lebbæus, whose surname was Thad-  
 4 dæus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

It seems needless to add anything in this place to what has been already offered at some length concerning these Twelve great names, in the note upon St. Mark's Gospel,—chap. iii. 16 to 19. No attentive reader can fail to be struck by the preference which St. Matthew here gives to his brother-Apostle St. Thomas, (whom he names before himself;) or the humility which led him to attach to his own name a record of the reproachful calling which he had once pursued,—“*Matthew the Publican.*” Concerning the three names of chief difficulty, Lebbæus or Thaddæus (who was Jude, our SAVIOUR's cousin,)—James the son of Alphæus,—and Simon the Canaanite, (incorrectly written ‘the *Canaanite*,’) it must suffice to refer to another part of this Commentary<sup>b</sup>.

St. Mark relates that the Twelve were sent forth “by two and two<sup>c</sup>.” St. Matthew accordingly will be found to enumerate the Apostles *pairs*. Does he perchance thereby inform

<sup>b</sup> See St. Mark iii. 16 to 19.

<sup>c</sup> St. Mark vi. 7.

which of them were companions? It seems probable; for the brothers are mentioned together; and Philip's name is linked with that of his beloved Nathanael. Simon the Zealot, be it observed, is the companion of one to whom his own warm spirit failed to communicate life and heat, and for whom it would have been good if he had never been born<sup>d</sup>.

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and com- 5  
manded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to 6  
the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

So begins our LORD's first Charge to the Twelve; which St. Matthew here gives far more fully than either St. Mark<sup>e</sup> or St. Luke<sup>f</sup>. The offer of Salvation was to be made first to *the Jews*. To them alone had our LORD been sent; as He Himself declared in language which strongly recalls the present, when a Woman of *Canaan* implored His Mercy<sup>g</sup>. If sometimes those who were aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel pressed forward, and,—like the Woman just noticed, or like the Centurion of Capernaum,—in reward of their Faith, succeeded in carrying away a blessing, such cases form a rare exception to the rule which God's Providence had laid down; and in con-

<sup>d</sup> St. Matthew xxvi. 24.

<sup>e</sup> St. Mark vi. 8 to 11.

<sup>f</sup> St. Luke ix. 3 to 5.

<sup>g</sup> St. Matthew xv. 24.

formity with which the Disciples are found to have acted even after our LORD's Ascension. The notices of their practice in this respect are frequent and interesting<sup>b</sup>. Then, however, their Commission was,—“Go, teach *all Nations*!”

Samaria, though lying in the very heart of Palestine, is yet reckoned with ‘the Gentiles;’ having been peopled chiefly by the ‘strange nations’ of the East whom the Assyrian King Shalmaneser transplanted into the country, after the carrying away of the Ten Tribes<sup>k</sup>. Its inhabitants were accordingly termed ‘Strangers!’ Shortly after our LORD's Ascension, however, it “received the Word of God” by the preaching of Philip the Deacon; whereupon “the Apostles which were at Jerusalem sent unto them Peter and John<sup>m</sup>.” “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me,” (said CHRIST to His Apostles, after His Resurrection,) “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, *and in Samaria*, and unto the uttermost part of the earth<sup>n</sup>.”

7 And as ye go, preach, saying, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

Take notice that this, which had been the Baptist's message<sup>o</sup>, and our SAVIOUR's also<sup>p</sup>, became

<sup>b</sup> Acts ii. 39: xi. 19: xiii. 46: xviii. 6.

<sup>i</sup> St. Matthew xxviii. 19.

<sup>k</sup> 2 Kings xvii. 6, 24; concerning the Samaritans, see more in the notes on St. John iv.

<sup>l</sup> St. Luke xvii. 16, 18.

<sup>m</sup> Acts viii. 5 and 14.

<sup>n</sup> Acts i. 8.

<sup>o</sup> St. Matthew iii. 2.

<sup>p</sup> St. Matthew iv. 17.

now, in turn, the message of the Twelve.—How secretly and silently,—how suddenly too, and in what an unlooked for manner,—did this offer of the Kingdom come to all ! How entirely was the appeal made to the ear of Faith, when those six pair of Holy Brethren,—armed with supernatural powers indeed, yet rude of speech, and poorly clad,—made their first circuit of the Towns of Galilee ! They carried no promises, either of present Glory or of future Conquest ;—held out no soothing hopes, either of earthly Prosperity, or of temporal Abundance ; but, preached Repentance and Amendment of Life,—and the actual Advent of MESSIAH ;—told of a cross to be borne, and a crown to be won ; but pointed for the fulfilment of all God's promises, to a period, yet future ; with trembling hands, guided the eyes which would *see* the King in His Beauty, to the Land which is very far off<sup>a</sup>.

In the mean time, it is discovered that their LORD, in His Wisdom, had imparted to His Disciples as yet but a very partial view of the nature of that Kingdom which He sent them forth to proclaim. Nay, at a much later period, we find Him delivering a parable “because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear<sup>r</sup>.” They clung to the notion of a glorious temporal Kingdom, and to the Reign of MESSIAH here on Earth, to the very last<sup>s</sup>. This expect-

<sup>a</sup> Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

<sup>r</sup> St. Luke xix. 11.

<sup>s</sup> See St. Matth. xx. 21 ; St. Mark x. 37.



ation lay at the root of the question which of their number put to our SAVIOUR on the Mount of Olives<sup>t</sup>; and even after the Resurrection, are found to inquire,—“LORD, wilt Thou at a time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?”

From all which it is plain that these Saints enjoyed, at first, no supernatural illumination; they were endued with no extraordinary powers of spiritual vision. God dealt with them, as He does with ourselves. Their advantages were even in a manner,) less than our own; for they had been accustomed themselves by slow degrees to the glories of the Gospel. As men who have lived long in darkness cannot at once distinguish objects when they are brought into the Light, even God seems to have fared with them. With such a limited conception of their Divine Master's mission, then, did the Twelve receive His commission to “preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

- 8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Apostles, in this place; to the Seventy Disciples, in another<sup>x</sup>. The gifts of healing which He delegated to the Twelve were symbolical of their spiritual function; in the exercise of which, He here warns them against the seductions of covetousness<sup>y</sup>. As they had received from Him "without money and without price," so were they commanded to impart to others without stint, and without fee. And Judas was one of those on whose ears the words of this caution fell!

Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass 9  
in your purses, nor scrip for *your* journey, 10  
neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet  
staves: for the workman is worthy of his  
meat.

Instead of shoes they were to wear sandals<sup>z</sup>. A single staff they might bear in their hands<sup>a</sup>,—but another might not be carried in reserve. In which directions, *who* sees not that there is something of deep and mysterious import? A provision of bread in the scrip, or wallet, was likewise forbidden,—“for,” (says our Lord), “the Workman is worthy of his meat.” Nor might any provision of money be carried in the purse; and thereby He ordained (as St. Paul assures us,) “that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel<sup>b</sup>.”

<sup>x</sup> St. Luke x. 19.

<sup>y</sup> Compare Exodus xviii. 21.

<sup>z</sup> St. Mark vi. 9.

<sup>a</sup> St. Mark vi. 8.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 14.

This last sanction, the Church holds to be abiding weight and efficacy. Shall then the former precepts be regarded as abrogated in the spirit, as well as in their letter? Doubtless the SAVIOUR'S Charge to the first Preachers of the Gospel,—over and above its literal and symbolical teaching to the men of that generation, and the individuals to whom it was originally addressed,—must be understood to convey to so many as shall ever enter His service, a perpetual warning against Covetousness, Luxury, and World Anxiety.

- 11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy: and there abide till ye go thence.

Which proves that the miraculous powers with which they were endowed, were limited. They cannot discern who is worthy, by any spiritual faculty of their own; but must make inquiry, as ordinary travellers do.

- 12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.

Probably, with the salutation,—“Peace be to this house!” as in St. Luke x. 5; which explains the meaning of the words which follow:—

- 13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

Take notice how those words of Christian salutation are spoken of as carrying with them a reality of blessedness. The word must *prosper* in the thing whereto it is sent; or, (like the dove sent forth too soon from the Ark,) must *return*—void<sup>c</sup>,

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor 14  
hear your words, when ye depart out of that  
house or city, shake off the dust of your  
feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be 15  
more tolerable for the land of Sodom and  
Gomorrha in the Day of Judgment, than  
for that City.

We find St. Paul and Barnabas fulfilling this command, at Antioch in Pisidia<sup>d</sup>, when the people of that city expelled them out of their coasts. To 'shake off the dust of the feet' seems clearly an emblematic act; shewing that God would, in like manner, reject the persons who did such things. And the dust was "a witness of the toil of the journey which the preachers had sustained." . . . "Doubtless," says one, "the higher a people rise under the means of grace, the lower they fall if they miscarry."

From this place, to the end of the chapter, is one continuous prophecy of the dangers and hardships to which the first preachers of the Gospel

<sup>c</sup> Isaiah lv. 11; compare for the expression, Ps. xxxv. 13.

<sup>d</sup> Acts xiii. 51.

were to be exposed ; mingled, however, with words of unearthly counsel and comfort, — with wondrous promises of support, and most precious assurances of Love. By foretelling the evils which were to befall them, their Divine Master both convinced them of His knowledge of the future, and prepared them to encounter it with fortitude, as well as to meet it without surprise. It is observable, however, (from the tenour of verses 17, 18, 23, &c.) that our LORD's prediction, in this place, of what was to befall His Disciples, looks forward many years. Compare verses 17 to 22, and verse 30, with St. Luke xxi. 12 to 17, and verse 18 : take note that the latter passage has reference to events subsequent to the Ascension ; and then consider how the words of the Divine Speaker even seem to stretch out beyond the present, to embrace the remote future in their wondrous span !

- 16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves : be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Sheep and Wolves,—the Serpent and the Dove : these are constant types in Holy Scripture of meekness and rapacity<sup>e</sup>,—of subtlety<sup>f</sup> and innocence<sup>g</sup> ! But it concerns us most to notice how pointed is the command, in this place, that Chris-

<sup>e</sup> Isaiah xi. 6 : lxx. 25 ; St. Matthew vii. 15 ; St. John x. 12 ; Acts xx. 29.

<sup>f</sup> Genesis iii. 1.

<sup>g</sup> St. Luke iii. 22.

tian men should combine a cautious and wary course of action, with perfect innocence of life and manner: for "here," (as a good man has written,) "are the two arms defensive of a Christian: Prudence against the evils of men,—Innocence against the arts of the Devil, and all that relates to his Kingdom." Christian Prudence, therefore, and Christian Simplicity, are to be the weapons of our warfare.

"When you can avoid it, suffer not men to ride over your heads, or trample you under foot: *that* is the wisdom of Serpents. And so must we; that is, by all just compliances, and toleration of indifferent changes in which a duty is not destroyed, and in which we are not active, so preserve ourselves, that we might be permitted to live, and serve God, and to do advantages to religion; so, purchasing time to do good in . . . . And this is the direct meaning of St. Paul,—'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil<sup>h</sup>:' that is, purchase as much respite as you can; buy or 'redeem the time,' by all honest arts<sup>i</sup>." St. Paul himself practised what he here recommends, when he divided his judges, (who were partly Sadducees, partly Pharisees,) by proclaiming himself to belong to the latter sect<sup>j</sup>:

<sup>h</sup> Ephes. v. 15, 16; with which compare by all means Coloss. iv. 5: "Walk in *wisdom* toward them that are without, *redeeming the time*."

<sup>i</sup> Bishop Taylor.

<sup>j</sup> Acts xxiii. 6.

also, when he appealed unto Caesar<sup>k</sup>.

Taylor, whose words have been just now has left five sermons on this text: in t  
three of which he enumerates the severa  
of Christian Prudence; in the last three, o  
tian Simplicity.

- 17 But beware of men: for they will  
you up to the councils, and they will s  
18 you in their synagogues; and ye sl  
brought before governors and kings i  
sake, for a testimony against them a  
Gentiles.

Rather, "in order that you may bear tes  
before them."

- 19 But when they deliver you up, t  
thought how or what ye shall speak:  
shall be given you in that same hou  
20 ye shall speak. For it is not ye that  
but the Spirit of your Father which  
eth in you.

It is easy to imagine the fame which wo  
these must have acquired in the early age:  
Church: how precious they must have b  
every one who went forth to preach the  
of CHRIST, and with what jealousy they  
have been regarded by as many as opposed  
selves to the Divine message. St. Paul h

<sup>k</sup> Acts xxv. 11.

us a striking confirmation of this remark in his Epistle to the Corinthians, who, (he informs us,) '*sought a proof of CHRIST speaking in him*.' "His letters," they said, "are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible<sup>m</sup>."

And the Brother shall deliver up the 21  
 Brother to death, and the Father the Child :  
 and the Children shall rise up against *their*  
 Parents, and cause them to be put to death.

"Wrongs which we suffer from strangers," (says a very old writer,) "pain us less than those we suffer from men on whose affections we had counted; for besides the bodily affliction, there is then the pain of lost affection." "This," (adds another,) "we often see in persecutions; nor is there any true affection between those whose faith is different."

And ye shall be hated of all *men* for My 22  
 Name's sake: but he that endureth to the  
 end shall be saved.

"For Virtue is not to begin, but to complete:"  
 "and the reward is not for those that begin, but  
 for those that bring to an end." So far, two  
 ancient writers. The importance attached in Holy  
 Scripture to *perfect* works,—perseverance till "*it*  
*is finished*,"—to endurance *to the end*,—is far

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 3.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. x. 10.



greater than might be supposed by those who have never attended to the circumstance.

- 23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come.

In conformity with this precept, we find St. Paul escaping from Damascus to Jerusalem<sup>m</sup>; and again flying from Iconium to Lystra<sup>n</sup>. Our Blessed LORD illustrated His precept by His example when He retired from Nazareth to Capernaum<sup>o</sup>; and from one village of Samaria to another<sup>p</sup>; and again, when He withdrew to a city called Ephraim, bordering on the wilderness<sup>q</sup>. Consider also St. John viii. 59, and x. 39, 40.

The concluding words of the present verse are somewhat more difficult. Let it be observed, however, that it is safest always to interpret the 'Coming of the Son of Man' of the *Final Advent* of CHRIST to Judgment<sup>r</sup>: and then, it will appear that our LORD's words in this place amount to a prophecy that after the Gospel has been preached to the Gentiles, and before the ancient people of God have been entirely reclaimed to the Gospel, the end of the World will arrive.

- 24 The Disciple is not above *his* Master, nor

<sup>m</sup> Acts ix. 25.    <sup>n</sup> Acts xiv. 6.    <sup>o</sup> St. Luke iv. 28 to 31.

<sup>p</sup> St. Luke ix. 51 to 56.

<sup>q</sup> St. John xi. 53, 54.

<sup>r</sup> As in St. Matthew xvi. 27: xxiv. 27: xxvi. 64. See however the notes on St. Matthew xvi. 28, and St. John xxi. 22.

the Servant above his Lord. It is enough 25 for the Disciple that he be as his Master, and the Servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the House Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of His household !

It will be remembered that "The Master of the House" was thus blasphemously addressed in St. Matthew xii. 24: also in St. Matthew ix. 34<sup>a</sup>. *One*, at least, of His Household is known from the sacred record to have shared his Master's reproach ; namely, St. John Baptist. See St. Luke vii. 33, and the note there.

The next eight verses are found to recur in quite a different connexion in St. Luke's Gospel, —xii. 2 to 9: affording one of the many striking proofs which the Gospels contain that the same sayings were for ever heard from the lips of our SAVIOUR. Here, they are addressed to the Twelve Apostles ; there, they are clearly addressed to a multitude: and it should not escape our notice that even in the first instance, the mode of expression is such that it is equally applicable to all Believers,—may be made the common property of all ranks of men, alike.

Fear them not therefore : for there is no- 26 thing covered, that shall not be revealed ; and hid, that shall not be known.

<sup>a</sup> See also St. John vii. 20 : viii. 48, 52 : x. 20.

This seems to be a proverbial saying; which conveys, (and is doubtless meant to convey,) many meanings. As it stands, it most likely implies the same thing which the Psalmist expresses in a certain place: "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy Righteousness as the Light, and thy judgment as the noon-day." St. Paul, if he does not actually allude to the words of our SAVIOUR, seems to supply an admirable commentary upon them, when, (after declaring himself and Apollos to be "Ministers of CHRIST, and Stewards of the mysteries of God,") he warns the Corinthians against judging him "*before the time, until the LORD come,—who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God*."<sup>1</sup>

- 27 What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops.

This is said with obvious reference to the style of building in Judæa, where "the housetop" afforded a convenient place for such an act as our LORD describes<sup>2</sup>: and there may be an allusion to the practice of the Jewish Teachers, who are said to have dictated softly in the ear what an Inter-

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxxvii. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 5.

<sup>3</sup> See the note on St. Luke v. 19.

preter immediately after delivered aloud. But the general teaching of the place seems to be, that whatsoever the Apostles had had conveyed to themselves under a figure, *that* they were without a figure to preach to all : what they had been taught secretly, *that* they were openly to proclaim : what they had heard in a corner of Judæa, *that* they were to make known all over the world.

And fear not them which kill the body, 28  
but are not able to kill the soul :

“ He does not hold out to them deliverance from death,” (says an ancient Archbishop,) “ but encourages them to despise it ; which is a much greater thing than to be rescued from death. Thus did this discourse of our Lord aid in fixing in their minds the doctrine of Immortality.”

but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.

“ This cannot be,” (as an ancient Father remarks,) “ before the soul is so joined to the body, that nothing may sever them. Yet is it rightly called the death of the soul, because it then does not live of God : and the death of the body, because though man does not cease to feel, yet because this his feeling has neither pleasure, nor health, but is a pain and a punishment, it is better named death than life.” Take notice, however, that at the end of the verse, a different word is *employed from that which was used in the*

beginning of it. In Hell, the body is not "*killed*." Our LORD speaks of "the second death"<sup>x</sup> as a continued *destroying* of the body and the soul. It is "everlasting-destruction";—as St. Paul in a certain place, speaks. See the note on St. Mark ix. 48.

The statement which follows proclaims a truth unsuspected by the heathen world.

- 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?  
and one of them shall not fall on the ground  
30 without your Father. But the very hairs of  
your head are all numbered.

Our ears,—our lips, it may be,—are familiar with these wondrous declarations of our SAVIOUS respecting the minuteness of His Providence; yet may it well be suspected that very few are at the pains to realize His words in their daily lives. Strange, that a statement which invests every minute event with dignity and importance should affect men so little! It has been truly observed by a living writer, that—"not till belief in these declarations, in their most literal sense, becomes the calm and settled habit of the soul, is Life ever redeemed from drudgery and dreary emptiness; and made full of interest, meaning, and Divine significance."

- 31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

<sup>x</sup> Rev. xxi. 8.

<sup>y</sup> 2 Thesa. i. 9.

ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

ould not our hearts assume the posture of  
rent attention, as often as the Author of  
tion is pleased to make *any* revelation,—to  
ent us with *any* comment,—on the mysterious  
gs which surround us ; those irrational crea-  
s of His, concerning which so little is known,  
use so little has been revealed? Compare  
place with St. Matthew vi. 26, and xii. 12.

Whosoever therefore shall confess Me be- 32  
: men, him will I confess also before My  
HER which is in Heaven.

Whereon a famous Bishop remarks,—“ True  
ed it is that the great promises of the Gospel  
made unto Faith ; and glorious things are  
ten of it. But the same promises are made to  
*Confession* of Faith together with it.” For it  
with the mouth that confession is made unto  
ation <sup>a</sup>.”

or must men confess Him with their lips only,  
in their lives ; in deed as well as in word. The  
stle, speaking of some in his days, remarks,—  
y profess that they know God ; but in works  
deny Him, being abominable, and disobe-  
t, and unto every good work reprobate <sup>b</sup> :” and  
LORD has spoken most clearly and solemnly  
erning the fate of those who do such things <sup>c</sup>.  
; on the contrary, who so confess CHRIST as  
ly to shew that they firmly believe in Him as

p. Pearson.

<sup>a</sup> Romans x. 10.

<sup>b</sup> Titus i. 16.

<sup>c</sup> St. Matthew vii. 21 to 23.

their SAVIOUR, their Mediator, and their Advocate enjoy the benefit of that Intercession which He declared to be eternally making for those who come unto God by Him<sup>d</sup>. He confesses that before the FATHER,—confesses that they belong to Him; and, (as He has Himself solemnly spoken,)—“*I pray for them*”<sup>e</sup>.

- 33 But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My FATHER which is in Heaven.

To which words of our SAVIOUR CHRIST, Paul clearly refers in his second Epistle to Timothy: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him, *if we deny Him, He also will deny us*”<sup>f</sup>.

- 34 Think not that I am come to send peace on Earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Our LORD speaks not of *the intention* with which He came into the world; for, “on Earth Peace was the song of the Angels on the Night of Nativity: nay, the Apostles, (“shod with preparation of the Gospel of Peace,”) were instructed, as we have just seen, to enter the House of their sojourn with a message of Peace. But the sad *result* of CHRIST’S coming (owing to the corruption of Man’s fallen Nature,) was that

<sup>d</sup> Hebrews vii. 25.

<sup>e</sup> St. John xvii. 9.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 12.

<sup>g</sup> Ephes. vi. 15.

ON ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

and division; "a sword," as it is here ded.

the cause of such enmity in households seems ded at in what follows :

or I am come to set a man at variance 35  
nst his Father, and the daughter against  
Mother, and the Daughter-in-law against  
Mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall 36  
hey of his own household.

ur SAVIOUR here quotes from one of His  
nt prophets,—namely, Micah vii. 6. One of  
fathers, remarking on the circumstance, ob-  
s justly,—“ We should always take note when  
sage is cited out of the Old Testament ; whe-  
the sense only, or the very words are given.”  
his place, the exactness of the quotation is  
rkable.

e that loveth Father or Mother more 37  
Me is not worthy of Me : and he that  
h Son or Daughter more than Me is  
vorthy of Me. And he that taketh not 38  
ross, and followeth after Me, is not  
hy of Me.

such sayings, uttered long before the time  
s Passion, did our SAVIOUR not obscurely in-  
e by what death He was Himself to die.  
*allusion is to the practice of compelling*



malefactors to bear the cross whereon  
destined to suffer.

- 39 He that findeth his life shall lose  
he that loseth his life for My sa  
find it.

A few words must here be supplied  
clause in the latter part of the verse  
indicates what they are. The blessed  
declares that the man who by denying  
and refusing to bear any part of *His* hear  
obtains the enjoyment of this present  
lose his inheritance in that which is  
whereas he who, for CHRIST's sake,  
this present life, shall win Life Eternal  
most the self-same sayings as are co  
the two last verses, will be found to re  
on, in chap. xvi. 24, 25. See also St. Jc

Our LORD concludes with lofty pro  
words of glorious encouragement :

- 40 He that receiveth you receiveth  
he that receiveth Me receiveth  
sent Me.

A marvellous saying, truly ! It is fou  
ed, with slight variations, on no less  
distinct occasions besides the present :  
St. Mark ix. 37 ; St. Luke x. 16 ; an  
xiii. 20.—Surely the sayings of our L  
are found to have been frequently o

and there are many such,) deserve to be most entirely considered!

He that receiveth a Prophet in the name of a Prophet shall receive a Prophet's reward: and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

"In the name of a prophet," and "of a righteous man," denotes the absence of any other motive or consideration, save that he *is* a prophet, (that is, a divinely commissioned teacher;) *is* a righteous man.

And his "*reward*," probably signifies a recompense not unlike that which the Preacher and Saint will himself receive at God's Hand. For it had been anciently decreed in Israel,—“As his merit is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his merit be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part *rewards*.”

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* in the name of a Disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Our SAVIOUR repeated this saying on a different occasion,—namely, in St. Mark ix. 41; the same context of which it will be found highly in-

<sup>b</sup> 1 Samuel xxx. 24.

structive to compare with the present place. It was then embracing 'a little child' in His arm but He reserves the *mention* of 'little ones' to the present occasion,—as if to remind us that the weak, and the guileless, and the simple, and the pure, and the young, are *all* as 'Babes'<sup>1</sup> in His sight.

And oh, the marvel of the promise thus twice recorded! "A cup of cold water," in Time, to find its reward—('a sea of pleasure,' as Bishop Andrewes speaks,)—throughout the ages of Eternity! It may be, that our merciful LORD thus mentioned the simplest offering of any, and of which is within the reach of the poorest, in order to indicate that *no one* who desires to shew love towards CHRIST need suppose himself barred of the means of doing so.

## The Prayer.

O GOD, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding; pour into our hearts such love toward Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> See St. Matth. xi. 25.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF

## St. Matthew's Gospel.

2 *John sendeth his disciples to CHRIST.* 7 *CHRIST's testimony concerning John.* 18 *The opinion of the people, both concerning John and CHRIST.* 20 *CHRIST upbraideth the unthankfulness and unrepentance of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum :* 25 *and praising His FATHER'S Wisdom in revealing the Gospel to the simple,* 28 *He calleth to Him all such as feel the burden of their sins.*

XI. And it came to pass, when JESUS had made an end of commanding His Twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and preach in their cities.

THE former Chapter described the sending forth of the Twelve ; and contained the solemn charge which their LORD and ours delivered to them on that occasion. We learn from the present verse that, after He had sent them forth, our SAVIOUR took His third great ministerial journey through Galilee, alone : and the Reader would take notice in how exceedingly slight a manner that mighty event is here recorded.

He is further requested to believe that the allusion in the ensuing verse is *not* to 'the works'

which were wrought on the occasion of the Journey just noticed : but to the cure of the Centurion's Servant, and the raising of the Widow's Son. A reference to St. Luke vii. 17, 18, is almost enough to establish this fact. It may be also here suggested, that when our LORD, (in verse 5,) says,—“the Dead are raised up;” it is to the miracle performed on the Widow of Nain's Son that He is alluding. The messengers of John had not *seen* this, indeed, but they receive an account of the transaction from those who have been eye-witnesses of it; and *that* is perhaps the reason why our LORD (in ver. 4) bids the messenger Go and shew John again those things which they “*heard*,” as well as “*saw*.”

- 2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of CHRIST, he sent two of his Disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?

St. John Baptist was at this time imprisoned in the castle of Machærus,—a fortress belonging to Herod Antipas, but on the very confines of his dominions; as will be found explained more at length in the notes on St. Mark vi. 17 to 20. The rumour of certain of our SAVIOUR's miracles, is found to have been conveyed to the Baptist's ears, by the Disciples of John<sup>a</sup>. Whereupon, he

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke vii. 18.

sends two of them to CHRIST, with the inquiry recorded in the text:—"Art Thou *He that should come*?" That is, Art Thou the CHRIST<sup>b</sup>? For, "*He that should come*," or "*is to come*," was one of the titles by which MESSIAH was designated in prophecy. See Habakkuk ii. 3, as it is quoted in Hebrews x. 37: and consider Genesis xlix. 10: Exodus iv. 13: Isaiah xxxv. 4: Ezekiel xxi. 27: Zech. ix. 9,—in the Old Testament. St. Matthew iii. 11: xxi. 9: xxiii. 39. St. John iii. 11: v. 43: vi. 14,—in the New.

But what was the motive of the Baptist in making this inquiry? Was it in consequence of any *personal* sense of doubt? Had he begun to waver in his belief? Certain it is, that he had been permitted to exercise his Ministry for the space of only a few months; and he seems to have been blessed with but slender intercourse with his LORD. May he then,—(as some have thought,)—have become perplexed and staggered, at the end of more than a year's imprisonment? Or, are we, (with our Fathers in the Faith,) simply to behold in this transaction the expedient of the Baptist to convince his disciples that *He* to whom they ought to transfer their allegiance, had indeed appeared?

Either alternative is extremely improbable: and the first is even monstrous. That the Disciples of John were incredulous with respect to our LORD'S Sacred Office, cannot indeed well be

<sup>b</sup> Compare St. Luke iii. 15, 16.

doubted: but that their incredulity was shared by their Master, is an opinion which can scarcely be entertained by any one who considers such places as,—St. John i. 26 to 34: iii. 27 to 36. On the other hand, that the Baptist also desired for himself, *the confirmation of his own Faith*,—the comfortable corroboration from the lips of CHRIST, of his own deep-rooted, and well-grounded convictions respecting MESSIAH,—seems an abundantly probable circumstance. This view suits the context very well; and rather derives support from the discourse which follows,—in verses 7, 8, &c. Indirectly, therefore, the Baptist may be regarded as an Ambassador in bonds; effectually discharging the purpose of his mission, even in the dungeon of Machærus; for “the Word of God is not bound<sup>c</sup>.”

St. Luke relates that our LORD performed many miracles of healing in reply to the inquiry of John’s Disciples<sup>d</sup>; whereupon,—

- 4 JESUS answered and said unto them, Go  
and shew John again those things which ye  
5 do hear and see: the blind receive their  
sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are  
cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are  
raised up, and the poor have the Gospel  
preached to them.

As if our LORD had added,—And John will be

<sup>c</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 9.

<sup>d</sup> St. Luke vii. 21.

abundantly satisfied ; John, whom ye are willing to believe, will be able easily to convince you, that MESSIAH must indeed be come at last : that these are the days of which it was foretold by Isaiah,—“Then the eyes of the Blind shall be opened, and the ears of the Deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the Lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the Dumb singe.” “For the Works which the FATHER hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the FATHER hath sent Me<sup>f</sup>.”

Yet more,—the Dead are now raised ; (for God's performance ever exceeds God's promise): and, as a crowning act of Love, the Mysteries of the Gospel,—unlike the Wisdom which the Jewish Doctors impart to those alone who can afford to pay largely for it,—are freely conveyed to the poorest sort of all : as was also specially foretold by Isaiah<sup>g</sup>.—See more in the note on St. Luke vii. 22.

Take notice how differently God deals with different applicants. The woman of Samaria asked no question, but was expressly informed by our LORD that He was the MESSIAH<sup>h</sup>. Here, men come from far to make the inquiry ; and instead of *words*, they are presented with a *sign*. Turn to the note on St. Luke viii. 39 : also on St. Mark

<sup>c</sup> Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.—Compare also Isaiah xxix. 18 : xxxii. 3, 4 : xlii. 7 : lxi. 1. Also Ps. cxlvi. 8. <sup>f</sup> St. John v. 36.

<sup>g</sup> Isaiah lxi. 1,—as interpreted by St. Luke iv. 18.

<sup>h</sup> St. John iv. 25, 26.



v. 19. Refer also to what was said on St. John i. 47.

- 6 And blessed is *he* whosoever shall not be offended in Me.

Here, then, is another "Beatitude<sup>1</sup>." The words, it has been thought, were aimed at, as well as addressed to, the two Disciples of John. They mean,—Blessed is he whose Faith shall not fail him; who, (in the language of Scripture,) shall not *stumble*, at anything he beholds, or shall hereafter behold in Me: My lowly Birth and Condition, (at which our LORD's countrymen were 'offended,'—see St. Matthew xiii. 57:)—My hard sayings, and lofty Teaching, (at which many of His Disciples were 'offended,'—see St. John vi. 60, 61, 66:)—My Cross and Passion, (at which the Twelve were 'offended,'—see St. Matthew xxvi. 31.) . . . Consider by all means Isaiah viii. 14: Romans ix. 33: 1 Cor. i. 23: 1 St. Pet. ii. 6 to 8.

The preceding inquiry seems to have been made, and answered, in the presence of a vast multitude of persons: and it would appear that the impression which it produced upon their minds was disparaging to the Baptist. Whence, it follows,—

- 7 And as they departed, JESUS began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the Wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

<sup>1</sup> See St. Matthew v. 3, &c. and the note there.

As if, (perhaps,) the Divine Speaker had said :—  
 : are suspecting My Forerunner of a wavering Faith ; but, by the evidence of your own  
 tions, I will convict you of your unreasonableness. Ye went out in large numbers<sup>1</sup> into the  
 ilderness, drawn by the fame of John's preaching, to behold the man of whom such wondrous  
 ings were related. Was it the character of one  
 sily shaken from his steadfastness,—a nature,  
 kle and unsteady as that of the reeds which grow  
 the Waste,—which drew you forth ? Or, did ye  
 , to behold one who had set his face like a flint  
 deliver his stern message ? and who stood up,  
 able as a rock, while he proclaimed God's Anger  
 ainst a stubborn and a sinful generation ?

But what went ye out for to see ? A Man<sup>8</sup>  
 clothed in soft raiment ? behold, they that  
 ear soft *clothing* are in Kings' houses.

The Divine Speaker continues to bear testimony,  
 turn, to *him* who had once borne such fearsome  
 ss testimony to Himself. He is reminding the  
 ople of the days when they trooped forth in such  
 owds, to see and hear the Baptist. Certainly it  
 as not a mere nothing,—a quivering reed,—which  
 ad provoked their curiosity : nor was it the report  
 one living luxuriously, which had drawn them  
 rth. But it was the fame of a great Prophet, who  
 oessed to have been sent by the living God : and  
 be preparing His way before Him. It may also

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew iii. 5, 6 : and St. Luke iii. 7.

be that, with our LORD's present auditory, the Baptist's protracted imprisonment constituted another ground of offence, and suspicion. "The hardships of a dungeon, (the multitude may have thought,) have crushed his spirit, and occasioned this timid inquiry. And if *John* can speak thus, in *whom* may not doubts be excusable?" But our LORD reminds them what manner of man the Baptist had shewn himself. Was it a person of luxurious life whom they had gone out into the Wilderness to see? Or was it one of austere manners? clad in a garment of skin; who fed on insects, and on honey out of the stony rock? whose dwelling was the Waste; and who had been nursed in Solitude,—amid hardships, sufferings, and privations?

Then,—as if to meet the suspicion that the Baptist may, after all, have borne a fallacious testimony concerning CHRIST; his Divine Apologist proceeds,—

- 9 But what went ye out for to see? A Prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a Prophet.

"*More than a Prophet;*" first,—because he was himself the subject of Prophecy; secondly,—because, whereas other Prophets had merely *foretold* the coming of CHRIST, St. John Baptist was His actual *precursor*: 'the Prophet of the Highest,' as it is said in St. Luke i. 76: going before Him, not only in thought, and in word; but in person, and in deed: pointing Him out, not only with his lips,

but even with his finger. Consider St. Luke i. 76. As it follows,—

For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Be- 10  
hold, I send My Messenger before Thy face,  
which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.

Which words are a quotation from Malachi iii. 1: but *there*, it is said,—“*My* Messenger . . . shall prepare the way before *Me*.” CHRIST, by whose Spirit all Prophecy was spoken<sup>k</sup>, taking back these words of His latest Prophet into His lips, and uttering them afresh, is found here, and wherever else they recur<sup>l</sup>, to deliver them otherwise: namely, thus,—“*My* Messenger . . before *Thy* Face, . . shall prepare *Thy* way before *Thee*.” Such quotations are nothing less than *interpretations* of Scripture. The present one not only declares CHRIST to be God; but reveals the Divine *Unity*.

“Having first delivered the Prophet’s testimony in praise of John,” (says an ancient Archbishop,) “He rested not there, but added His own decision respecting him:” setting him above all the Saints of the Old Testament, when He said,—

Verily I say unto you, Among them that 11  
are born of women there hath not risen a  
greater than John the Baptist:

On which, one of the Ancients remarks,—“I

<sup>k</sup> 1 St. Peter i. 2.

<sup>l</sup> Namely, in St. Mark i. 2 and St. Luke vii. 27. Compare St. Luke i. 76.

suppose that all the Saints, tried by the keenness of the Divine judgment, rank in a fixed order some lower, some before other. Whence we understand that he who hath none greater than himself, is greatest of all." Take notice that the "greatness" of John had been already the subject of Angelic comment; as St. Luke relates<sup>m</sup>. Our LORD, having thus brought His praise of the Baptist to a climax, proceeds to establish more clearly the dignity of the Christian Dispensation: the surpassing Blessedness of that Gospel which He Himself came to deliver; and for which, the preaching of John only prepared the way.

notwithstanding, he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.

A marvellous saying truly, and one which may be easily misunderstood; yet one which it is no difficult to understand aright. John was doubtless incomparably superior in holiness to all among ourselves, who are actual inheritors of the Kingdom of which CHRIST here speaks. But what our LORD implies, is, that whatever Holiness attached to His great Forerunner, as well as to all other Saints of the elder Covenant, was derived from them not from *the Law*, (under which they lived) but from *the Gospel*, which as yet was not. For "not having received the promises, but having [only] seen them afar off<sup>n</sup>," their Blessedness arose out of their participation, by Faith, in that Kin

<sup>m</sup> St. Luke i. 15.

<sup>n</sup> Hebrews xi. 13.

dom concerning which our LORD declares such glorious things : and since it was "the Kingdom of Heaven," darting forward a ray of its own future glory, which made those elders supremely great,—it is manifest that every little one who, by Baptism into CHRIST'S Death, is made a "member of CHRIST, a child of GOD, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven,"—is in a true sense "greater than he" who, naturally an alien, becomes, only by special grace and favour, a partaker in the Blessedness to come.

And from the days of John the Baptist <sup>12</sup> until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

The Apostles were sent "rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel<sup>o</sup>:" but it was the Publicans and Sinners<sup>p</sup> who profited by their preaching. The Kingdom of Heaven, therefore, when these last "pressed into it<sup>q</sup>," is said to have "suffered violence," and to have been "taken by force;" for the birth-right and the blessing of Israel, forfeited by them, was snatched away and firmly held, by the Gentiles. This had been typically foreshewn by Jacob when he supplanted Esau<sup>r</sup>; and indeed, throughout the Old Testament, the minds of faithful men had been prepared for such an issue, by the preference generally enjoyed by *the younger son*. See the third note on St. Luke xv. 32.

<sup>o</sup> St. Matthew x. 6.

<sup>p</sup> See St. Luke vii. 39.

<sup>q</sup> St. Luke xvi. 16.

<sup>r</sup> Genesis xxvii. 36.

This verse and the next, will be found in quite a different connexion in St. Luke's Gospel,—chap xvi. 16.

- 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

The Baptist was the connecting link between the Law and the Gospel; as will be found explained in the note on St. John i. 28. With him, was "*The beginning of the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST*,"—as St. Mark declares<sup>a</sup>; and St. Peter implies no less, in the first chapter of the Acts,—ver. 22. See the note on St. Luke i. 22.

- 14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias which was for to come.

"*If ye will receive it*:"—for God constrains not the Will<sup>t</sup>, but leaves men free to act as they choose. John Baptist therefore was the "*Elijah*," promised by the prophet Malachi at the very end of the Canon of the Old Testament<sup>u</sup>; and this our LORD repeated on another occasion,—viz. in St. Matthew xvii 10 to 13. Not *Elijah himself*,—which the carnal minded Jews supposed possible; as appears from the inquiry recorded in St. John i. 21<sup>x</sup>,—where see the note: but one who came "*in the Spirit and Power of Elias*." Hence, it follows,—

- 15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

<sup>a</sup> St. Mark i. 1.

<sup>t</sup> See the third note on St. Matthew iv. 11

<sup>u</sup> Malachi iv. 5, 6.

<sup>x</sup> With which compare St. Matthew

xvi. 14.

<sup>y</sup> St. Luke i. 17.

Concerning which words, see the note on St. Mark iv. 9. The Reader should also here refer to the 29th and 30th verses of vii<sup>th</sup>. Chapter of St. Luke's Gospel,—where the effect which our LORD's words produced on His auditory, is noticed.

But whereunto shall I liken this generation ?

With such a phrase, the same Divine Speaker prefaced His Parable of the Grain of Mustard Seed<sup>a</sup>; and of the Leaven<sup>a</sup>. He proceeds to derive His illustration from the sports of Children: but *what particular sport*, is not exactly known. An ancient Eastern Bishop relates that “a company of boys used to assemble in the market place; and, mocking the sudden changes in the affairs of this Life, some of them sang,—some mourned. But the mourners did not rejoice with those that rejoiced; nor did those who rejoiced attend to those who wept. They then rebuked each other, in turn, for their want of sympathy.” Doubtless it must have been something of this kind which is here alluded to, by our SAVIOUR.

It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

<sup>a</sup> St. Mark iv. 30; and St. Luke xiii. 18.

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke xiii. 20.



which, (Chorazin,) is nowhere else even *named* in the Gospels: while no single miracle is related as having been performed in either City<sup>d</sup>. And how does this suggest the immensity and the number of the operations of *His* Hands, — concerning which St. John said that “if they should be written every one,” he supposed “that even the World itself could not contain the books that should be written<sup>e</sup>!”

And next,—these words of our LORD are remarkable as revealing the extent of the Divine Omniscience. God knows not only what *will be*; but (which seems stranger,) what *would have been*. I Tyre and Sidon had seen the miracles which the streets of Chorazin and Bethsaida had witnessed the inhabitants of those two famous cities *would have repented*. . . . The same knowledge is declared in 1 Samuel xxiii. 11 and 12; where God tells David that the men of Keilah will deliver him into the hand of Saul, if he remains within the city. And the like is observable in other places.

Lastly, he observed that St. Peter, St. Andrew and St. Philip,—were all of Bethsaida. There are great saints therefore in the very worst cities. Even filthy Sodom harbours “just Lot.”

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more toler

<sup>d</sup> This Bethsaida is to be distinguished from that other Bethsaida, *East* of the Lake, near which the five thousand were fed.—St. Luke ix. 10; and where the blind man was restored to sight.—St. Mark viii. 22.

<sup>e</sup> St. John xxi. 25.

able for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you.

Such words remind us that sinners are but *reserved* for punishment: that although, *to us*, Tyre and Sidon seem gone by, and the Old World has become but a History,—to the ALMIGHTY, it is all far otherwise. With Him, Tyre and Sidon are a living reality,—a breathing multitude; which simply *waits* for the Day of Judgment to receive its final doom!

And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted 23 unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I 24 say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for thee.

Some of the remarks already offered on verses 21 and 22, here suggest themselves afresh.

Capernaum,—“exalted unto Heaven,” (that is, raised to the very highest pitch of greatness<sup>f</sup>), by the habitual presence, by the frequent discourses, and by the mighty miracles of the LORD of Heaven and Earth,—was to experience a tremendous fall: and the denunciation has taken strict effect; since the name of the City has long since perished, and its very site is only conjecturally known. Travellers

<sup>f</sup> Compare the expression with St. Luke x. 18.

describe the spot on which Capernaum must have stood, as a tract of marshy ground close to the Lake; overgrown with shrubs, and overspread with masses of stone and marble,—the foundations and sub-structures of the ancient edifices. “The utter desolation of the place,” (writes a friend, already quoted<sup>†</sup>), “is most striking. Plants of a wild thorny nature, mingled with oleander, and other kinds, form a covering to the shore, quite down to the water’s edge; so thick and tangled, that it is with great difficulty you can make your way through it. Almost hidden by this rank vegetation, lie broken columns, large hewn stones of costly workmanship, beautiful capitals, &c. in the greatest confusion, and in almost incredible numbers. Large snakes and venomous reptiles abound among the brush-wood; and add not a little to the desolate and ruined character of the place.”

Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum have all three entirely disappeared. There can be no doubt however that they stood about two miles distant one from the other, on the Western side of the Lake, towards its Northern extremity. The terms in which their future destiny is mentioned clearly prove that there are different degrees of misery in Hell.

In connexion with the last note, above, on verse 21, the Reader is requested to refer to some remarks which are strictly applicable to the present place, in the concluding note on St. Matthew viii.

<sup>†</sup> See the notes on St. Luke vii. 11, and St. John ii. 1.

10.—He will also discover from St. Luke's Gospel, —x. 12 to 15,—that our Blessed LORD delivered almost the self-same words as those contained in the last five verses, (verses 20 to 24,) on quite a distinct occasion.

At that time JESUS answered and said, I <sup>25</sup> thank Thee, O FATHER, LORD of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes.

Our LORD says not,—“And hast revealed them unto *the foolish* ;” but, “Unto *Babes* :” which must evidently mean,—the humble and meek : persons of childlike dispositions. And this proves that by “wise and prudent,” He only means men “*wise in their own conceits*,”—as St. Paul expresses it<sup>b</sup> : condemns—not, Wisdom and Understanding, but—Pride. “Woe unto them,” (says the prophet Isaiah,) “who are wise *in their own eyes*, and prudent *in their own sight* <sup>i</sup>.”

Our LORD here “thanks” the FATHER,—that is, “praises,” and “adores” Him ; “gives Him glory,”—*not* for having *hid* the saving Doctrines of the Gospel from “the wise . . . the Scribe . . . the Disputer of this World<sup>j</sup> ;” but for having *revealed* those blessed Truths to the lowly and meek ; His “little ones,” as He elsewhere calls them. Compare the form of expression of Romans vi. 17.

<sup>b</sup> Romans xi. 25 ; xii. 16.

<sup>i</sup> Isaiah v. 21.

<sup>j</sup> 1 Cor. i. 20.

Our Blessed LORD's sayings in the present and the two next verses, will be found to recur in quite a different connexion in St. Luke's Gospel,—x. 21, 22.

- 26 Even so, FATHER : for so it seemed good in Thy sight.

Whereby we learn that it is in conformity with God's Eternal decree, that the meek are exalted ; and the proud in the imaginations of their hearts, scattered : " the hungry," " filled with good things<sup>k</sup>;" and " the rich," " sent empty away." And Holy Scripture is full of this, from one end to the other. " Surely, He scorneth the scornors; but He giveth grace unto the lowly<sup>l</sup>,"—says the wise King: and his words are repeated both by St. James<sup>m</sup>, and by St. Peter<sup>n</sup>. This doctrine is the very key-note of the *Magnificat*, or Song of the Blessed Virgin Mary. " For Judgment I am come into this World," said our Blessed LORD ; " that they which see not might see ; and that they which see might be made blind." Consider Romans i. 21, 22. 1 Cor. i. 18 to 31.

- 27 All things are delivered unto Me of My FATHER : and no man knoweth the SON, but the FATHER ; neither knoweth any man the FATHER, save the SON, and *he* to whomsoever the SON will reveal *Him*.

<sup>k</sup> Compare St. Matth. vii. 11, with St. Luke xi. 13.

<sup>l</sup> Proverbs iii. 34.    <sup>m</sup> St. James iv. 6.    <sup>n</sup> 1 St. Peter v. 5

By the mutual knowledge, proclaiming that the FATHER and the SON are of one substance.

It is the Divine office of the SON to reveal the FATHER. The FATHER declares Himself by His WORD. See the notes on St. John i. 1.—And not only “no *man*” knoweth the FATHER; but *no being whatever*. The only access to the FATHER is through the SON.

“To whomsoever the SON will reveal Him,”—should rather be, — “May *determine to reveal Him:*” for express mention is made of *the counsel* of His Will<sup>o</sup>.

Hear, next, what comfortable words our SAVIOUR CHRIST saith unto all that truly turn to Him.

Come unto Me, all *ye* that labour and are 28 heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Compare, by all means, the similar invitation in St. John vii. 37: “If any man thirst, let him *come unto Me*, and drink.” “He that *cometh to Me*, shall never hunger; and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst\*.” To “come” to CHRIST, is to *believe* in Him: to “draw near with Faith.” And the present invitation is universal; for the Flesh itself is a burden,—as the Church admits in her Burial service; and as many of us as “are in this Tabernacle do groan,—*being burdened*.” Consider, further, whether those “*heavy burdens and grievous to be borne*,” which the Scribes and Pharisees bound,

\* Ephes. i. 11.

\* St. John vi. 35.

† 2 Cor. v. 4.

‡ St. Matthew xxiii. 4. Compare Acts xv. 28.

and laid on the shoulders of our SAVIOUR's auditory, may not have been also alluded to. For take notice that in ver. 30 the Blessed Speaker Himself proposes a 'burden;' with the gracious intimation, however, that it shall be 'light.'

And yet, the persons chiefly addressed,—those who "labour" most, and are most "heavy laden,"—are doubtless such as have been in bondage to the Devil, and are servants of Sin: such as are "grieved and wearied with the burden of *their sins*:" such as *feel* them to be a burden,—as it is said in the heading of the present Chapter. In support of which view, see the concluding note.

- 29 Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

In which words, we have an allusion to Zechariah ix. 9, and a quotation from Jeremiah vi. 16. Would it not seem as if our LORD loved to re-syllable the words of His ancient Prophets?

Learn of Me,—“not, to create a World, or to do Miracles in that World: but,—Learn *meekness and lowliness of heart*.” So writes a famous Bishop of the West: and he proceeds,—“Wouldst thou build up a mighty fabric of greatness? Lay first the foundation of Humility: for the loftier the structure any one seeks to raise, the deeper must he dig for his foundation.”

“Take My yoke upon you:” that is, Believe

† Communion Service. Compare Ps. xxxviii. 4.

**My Doctrine, Submit to My Discipline.** "This yoke is twofold,—a yoke of Instruction, and a yoke of Affliction. And CHRIST calls it *His* yoke; because He, as a Lord, lays it upon our necks; and, as a Servant, bore it upon His own neck first, before He laid it upon ours. Observe, further, that the way and manner how to bear CHRIST's yoke must be learned of CHRIST Himself." Take notice how persuasively He recommends it:—

For My yoke *is* easy, and My burden is so light.

The word here translated "easy," rather signifies "sweet,"—"pleasant,"—"gracious,"—"profitable," or the like: and the meaning of the Blessed Speaker seems to be that He invites men to no morose or melancholy course; but that His statutes will be found to be "sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb"; His testimonies, the very "rejoicing of the heart": that in His presence is "fulness of joy; at His right Hand, pleasures for evermore". For "His commandments are not grievous," as St. John declares<sup>2</sup>. This announcement therefore agrees with that which is found in another place: namely, that WISDOM's "ways" (that is, CHRIST's ways,) "are ways of *Pleasantness*, and all her paths are Peace<sup>3</sup>." . . . Not every one, it

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xix. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxix. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xvi. 11.

<sup>4</sup> 1 St. John v. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Prov. iii. 17. Compare Wisdom viii. 1.



may be thought, is aware of the extent to which *Joy*, as one of the graces of the Christian Life, is recommended in Scripture<sup>2</sup>. And can there be any doubt that ample provision has been made for it, likewise?

What effect then did this gracious invitation produce upon those who heard? From the course of the narrative in the present Gospel, you cannot tell; but by a reference to St. Luke's account—(vii. 24 to 35,)—of the preceding discourse, it will be discovered that, at the end of it, a Woman of the City, which was a sinner,—one, therefore, who “laboured and was heavy laden,”—moved by the loving promise of a sweet yoke, and a light burden, and withal rest unto her soul,—followed our Lord into the House of the Pharisee where He went to eat bread; there washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Wherefore her sins, which were many, were forgiven!

## The Prayer.

GRANT, we beseech Thee, merciful LORD, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace; that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind: through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. Amen.

<sup>2</sup> See the following places:—St. Matth. xiii. 20, 44. St. John xv. 11: xvi. 20, 22, 24. Romans v. 2: xii. 12: xiv. 17: xv. 13. 2 Cor. vi. 10. Galat. v. 22. Philipp. i. 25: iii. 1: iv. 4: 1 Thess. i. 6: v. 16. 1 St. Peter i. 6, 8.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF

## St. Matthew's Gospel.

1 CHRIST reproveth the blindness of the Pharisees concerning the breach of the Sabbath, 3 by Scriptures, 9 by Reason, 13 and by a Miracle. 22 He healeth the man possessed, that was blind and dumb. 31 Blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST shall never be forgiven. 36 Account shall be made of idle words. 38 He rebuketh the unfaithful, who seek after a sign : 49 and sheweth who is His brother, sister, and mother.

XII. At that time JESUS went on the 1 Sabbath day through the corn ; and His disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But 2 when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day. But He said unto them, Have ye not read 3 what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him ; how he entered into the House of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for

him to eat, neither for them which with him, but only for the Priests ?

It is admirably said in the heading of the sent Chapter,—“CHRIST reproveth the blin of the Pharisees concerning the breach o Sabbath, by Scriptures,—by Reason,—and Miracle.” One of the Scriptures cited by —(1 Samuel xxi. 1 to 6,)—has been already commented on, in the notes to St. ii. 23 to 26,—which see. The Blessed Spēa found to have added a further reference to ture on this occasion.

- 5 Or have ye not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath days the Priest the Temple profane the Sabbath, and blameless ?

That is,—Break the letter of the Comrment which declares that *no manner of work* be done on the Sabbath: for the Law req “on the Sabbath day, two lambs” for a b offering; “beside the continual burnt off and his drink offering<sup>a</sup>.”

The Pharisees may have been disposed to that the Temple sanctified *that* labour, but *here* there was *no* Temple: wherefore our proceeds,

- 6 But I say unto you, that in this pla One greater than the Temple.

<sup>a</sup> Numbers xxviii. 9, 10.

"Greater,"—inasmuch as it was "*His Temple*<sup>b</sup>;" a House made glorious, yea, and made holy too, by *His* presence,—who was the true *Shekinah*, (or Glory), foretold by the Prophet Haggai<sup>c</sup>. The Reader is referred to the notes on the words "dwelt among us," in St. John i. 14.

But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, 7 I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Thus, for the second time, our SAVIOUR quotes Hosea vi. 6. See St. Matthew ix. 13, and the note there. The Reader will perceive, from the allusion to the "Priests in the Temple," in ver. 5, that our LORD's argument is,—If then *those* My Servants, who serve *My Temple* only, go unblamed, although their acts are of a purely Ceremonial kind,—shall blame attach to *these* My Servants who wait on *Me*, for the performance of an act of Mercy,—involving the very support of human life? My Disciples are "guiltless," that is, "free from blame," (says our LORD).—

For the Son of Man is LORD even of the 8 Sabbath day.

It was *He* who had originally "blessed the seventh Day, and hallowed it," and commanded men to observe it. *He* therefore had power, and *He only*, to dispense with its observance. See the note on St. Mark ii. 8.

<sup>b</sup> See *Malachi* iii. 1.

<sup>c</sup> See *Haggai* ii. 7 and 9.

The incident which follows, happened on 'another Sabbath,'—St. Luke vi. 6.

- 9 And when He was departed thence, he  
10 went into their synagogue: and, behold,  
there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked Him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days? that they might accuse Him.

The Reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark iii. 1 and 2.

- 11 And He said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

The self-same striking reasoning is found to recur in St. Luke xiv. 5,—when our Blessed Lord was about to heal 'a certain man which had the dropsy.' Close akin to it, is what we meet with in St. Luke xiii. 15. Consider also the reasoning in St. John vii. 22, 23,—which is quite similar.

- 12 How much then is a man better than a sheep!

He does not allude, as He might have done, to their real motive. He knew that it was not from humanity to the sheep, but from regard to their own interests, that they performed the act de-

scribed in verse 11. But, as the Author of Creation, He sets the value of one of His creatures against the other; and the argument is complete. He contrasts a sheep with a man: and leaves *them* to contrast the work of Covetousness with the work of Love. Compare St. Matthew vi. 26.

Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.

Our LORD Himself answers the question He had Himself already asked: see St. Mark iii. 4.

“Thus, in the everlasting rest,” says an ancient, beautifully,—“we shall rest only from evil, and not from good.”

Then saith He to the man, Stretch forth 13  
thine hand. And he stretched *it* forth; and  
it was restored whole, like as the other.

Then the Pharisees went out, and held a 14  
council against Him, how they might de-  
stroy Him. But when JESUS knew *it*, He 15  
withdrew Himself from thence:

The Reader is referred to St. Mark iii. 3, 4, 5, 6,  
and 7; and to the notes which he will find upon  
these words in that place.

and great multitudes followed Him, and  
He healed them all;

“Him whom the Pharisees with one consent  
plotted against to destroy, the untaught multi-  
eaa

tude with one consent love and follow. Whence they received the fulfilment of their desires."

- 16 and charged them that they should not make Him known.

See the first note on St. Matthew viii. 4, and the notes on St. Mark i. 44, 45. The Evangelist proceeds to quote from Isaiah xlii. 1 to 4.

- 17 That it might be fulfilled which was  
18 spoken by Esaias the Prophet, saying, Behold My servant, whom I have chosen ;

For CHRIST "took upon Him the form of a *Servant*<sup>d</sup>,"—seeing that He, being God, assumed our Human Nature. Among His Disciples, moreover, He was "as he that *serveth*<sup>e</sup>." It is only in respect of His Incarnation, that our LORD JESUS CHRIST is called the Servant of ALMIGHTY God.

My Beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased :

The very words of St. Matth. iii. 17, and xvii. 5.

I will put My Spirit upon Him ;

Consider St. Luke i. 35 : iii. 22 : iv. 18,—quoting Isaiah lxi. 1.

<sup>d</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

<sup>e</sup> St. Luke xxii. 27 : with which compare St. Matthew xx. 28, and St. John xiii. 14.

and He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

That is,—He shall out of the Law bring forth, and display before all nations, the pure Doctrines of the Gospel.

He shall not strive, nor cry ; neither shall 19 any man hear His voice in the streets.

“ For such was the carefulness of the Prophets,” says one of the ancients, “ that they had not omitted even this ; but had noted all His ways and movements.” Consider the instances of this which our LORD had just given, verses 14 to 16 : and which seems to have suggested the quotation from Isaiah. See the note on St. Mark iii. 7. Consider also such places as the following : St. John i. 39 : ii. 9 : iii. 2, &c. iv. 6, 7, &c. v. 6 to 8, 12, 13, 14, &c. vi. 15. vii. 10, 11 : viii. 2, and 59 : ix. 6, 7, 12 : x. 23, 24, 39, &c. &c.

A bruised reed shall He not break, and 20 smoking flax shall He not quench,

In the words of an excellent living writer, this may mean,—“ He shall move so gently, that His tread shall not break a bruised reed ; nor extinguish the glimmering spark in the smoking flax.” —“ He that holds not out his hand to a sinner, nor bears his brother's burthen,” remarks an ancient, “ breaks a bruised reed ; and he who



despises a weak spark of Faith in a little one, quenches smoking flax.”—Consider the following places,—St. Mark xvi. 7 and 9. St. Luke vii. 48. St. John iv. 26 : viii. 11.

It is implied hereby, that He who is ‘Mighty to save’ *could* have broken the Jewish nation, as a man breaks ‘a bruised reed;’ could have quenched the spark of Faith, had He willed it: but He spared the smoking flax, in His Love and Mercy.

till He send forth judgment unto victory.  
21 And in His Name shall the Gentiles trust.

“Till,” (in the words of the writer last quoted,) “by this mild and quiet course, He makes the just and holy cause of the Gospel to triumph in the World.” Consider Isaiah ii. 10 : St. Matthew xxviii. 19 : St. Luke xxiv. 47. The Evangelist has been quoting from Isaiah xlii. 1 to 4. The Hebrew of this last verse reads, “And the isles shall wait for His Law.”

22 Then was brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb : and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

“*Spake* and saw :” not “saw and spake.” That is, because the thing which made the people wonder most was, that “when the devil was gone

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 1.

out, *the dumb spake*:" as it is said in St. Luke xi. 14.

And all the people were amazed, and said, 23  
Is not this the Son of David ?

That is,—the promised MESSIAH; of whom it had been specially foretold by the Prophet, that He should restore sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb. In His days, said Isaiah, "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing<sup>s</sup>." See the note on St. Matthew ix. 27.

But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they 24  
said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils,  
but by Beelzebub the Prince of the devils.

Concerning 'Beelzebub,' see the note on St. Matthew x. 25. These men mean,—“His power over the demons is obtained by a compact with the Prince of Darkness.” Already have we heard this blasphemous charge brought against Him<sup>b</sup>: by which His enemies admitted *the reality* of what they saw. More will be found on this subject in the notes on St. Mark iii. 22,—to which the Reader is referred.

The words in the text must have been now said privately however, or it was only the secret thought of their heart; for the Evangelist proceeds:

<sup>s</sup> Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.

<sup>b</sup> See chap. ix. 34.

- 25 And JESUS knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every City or House divided against itself shall not  
26 stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his Kingdom stand?

It will be perceived that our LORD meets the blasphemy of His enemies by two arguments. One precedes, and is the plain statement of a most important principle: which convicted them of having advanced an unreasonable accusation. See the note on St. Mark iii. 26. Then follows another argument, which is of a personal kind,—verses 27 and 28. In the last place,—verse 29,—our LORD establishes the very contrary of what His enemies had advanced; for whereas they said that He must be in league with Satan, our SAVIOUR proves that He must needs, on the contrary, have vanquished him, before He could perform these miracles.

- 27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges.

To quote the words of a great living writer,—  
“He appeals also to those sprung from themselves, who, by the use of well-known forms of exorcism, in the name of the God of Abraham, and Isaac,

and Jacob, succeeded, (through the power of God exerted for His ancient servants' sake,) in the expulsion of evil spirits from the bodies of men: and He declares that these should be witnesses against them in the Judgment, if they dared impiously to ascribe to the Prince of Darkness wonders effected with more signal success by the immediate command of CHRIST." Compare St. Matt. vii. 22. St. Luke ix. 49, and Acts xix. 13, 14.

Having silenced the Pharisees by this personal argument, our SAVIOUR presents them with the solemn alternative.

But if I cast out devils by the SPIRIT of 28  
God, then the Kingdom of God is come  
unto you.

"The fact of demons being thus expelled, was a sufficient proof that the promised MESSIAH was come: the Kingdom of Him whom the SPIRIT of God was to anoint for these precise works of healing deliverance, and for proclaiming the acceptable year of the LORD to Israel<sup>1</sup>."

The argument therefore takes the form of a *dilemma*. "If I, in order to cast out Satan, am in league with Satan,—then must you allow that your children are so likewise: but if I by the SPIRIT of God work these wonders,—then you must admit that the Kingdom of Heaven

<sup>1</sup> *Isaiah lxi. 1, 2*, quoted in St. Luke iv. 18.

has overtaken you,"—"come before you were aware."

Compare the last words of verse 28, with St. Luke xi. 20,—and see the note there.

29 Or else,

This word only calls attention, gives earnestness, to a question that is asked. It recurs in chap. vii. 9: xx. 15; and may be Englished,—“Pray,”—“Come,”—or “Consider.”

how can one enter into a Strong Man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the Strong Man? and then he will spoil his house.

*The Strong Man* has indeed been bound by One stronger than he; that is, his power to harm our race has been broken. “Yet ought we not therefore to be careless,” said an ancient; “for here, the Conqueror Himself pronounces him to be *strong*.”

The Reader is referred to the note on St. Mark iii. 27, and all the references there.

30 He that is not with Me is against Me; and He that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad.

The connexion of this verse with what precedes, requires supplying; but it is always a perilous matter to supply what He who ‘spake as never man spake,’ has left unrecorded. It is humbly

suggested however, that it is as if our LORD had said :—I have shewn you that because I am, (as my actions prove,) *against* Satan, I cannot be connected *with* him : *he* also, because He is not with Me, is *against Me*. So likewise are all who partake his spirit. Whosoever is not with Me is against Me : nay, to My spiritual harvest, if any one contributes not his labour, he doth but scatter to the winds. Whosoever expects to reap a harvest of divine benefit, otherwise than through faith in Me, will find his hopes and his labour vain. It is only by acting “with Me,” that any amount of victory against the strong man I speak of, has ever been obtained, or can hereafter be hoped for.

Our SAVIOUR proceeds to remark on the guilt which may be incurred by such a charge as His enemies had just now brought against Himself. The mention of “the SPIRIT” (in verse 31) seems to have reference to what was said in ver. 28.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of 31  
sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto  
men ; but the blasphemy *against* the HOLY  
GHOST shall not be forgiven unto men. And 32  
whosoever speaketh a word against the Son  
of Man, it shall be forgiven him : but who-  
soever speaketh against the HOLY GHOST, it  
shall not be forgiven him, neither in this  
world, neither in the *world* to come.

*It is not of course meant that THE SON is less*

than THE HOLY GHOST. (God forbid ! ) But as "made flesh,"—as the *Son of Man*,—as one of us, He might be rejected ; and yet the sin incurred might be not unpardonable.

The very solemn statement which follows, and is twice repeated, was not written that weak believers should perplex and torture themselves with it ; neither is it one which *any* may presume to overlook. If Impenitence *persevered in to the end* is common, then may it be feared that the sin against the HOLY GHOST is not uncommon either. The Reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark iii. 28, 29, and 30,—where a few remarks will be found on this mysterious subject.

- 33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good ; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt : for the tree is known by *his* fruit.

It is often difficult to trace the exact connexion of one verse with another ; because a large portion of our LORD's Discourse is often omitted. Compare for instance St. Luke xi. 23 and 24, with St. Matthew xii. 30, 43,—where observe, seven verses are supplied by one Evangelist which are omitted by the other.

Our SAVIOUR is thought here to refer to what went before. He perhaps bids His enemies either admit that He is God, since they see that His acts are so good and gracious :—or else, if they

ill call *Him* Beelzebub, let them declare His actions to be devilish likewise; for the tree is known by his fruit:—"God cannot do evil works, nor the Devil good works."

But from what follows (in verses 34, 35,)—and from a comparison of such places as St. Matthew i. 16 to 18, and St. Luke vi. 43 to 45,—it seems rather to be a warning, similar to that of the prophet,—“O Jerusalem, wash *thine heart* from wickedness . . . How long shall Thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” “*The man* must be changed first, that his works may be changed: for if he remains in that wherein he is evil, he cannot have good works. If he remains in that wherein he is good, he cannot have evil works.” The human *heart* (mentioned in verse 35) seems to be the ‘tree’ here spoken of; and the ‘fruit’ is *the fruit of the lips*<sup>k</sup>. Consider St. James iii. 10, 11, 12; and observe that *the tongue* is clearly referred to above, by the language of verse 32; and below, in verses 34, 36, 37.

When, from the individual bearing of these words, we proceed to inquire into their *national* application, we are reminded of the many places of the Old and New Testament where the Jewish nation, or rather the Jewish Church, is spoken of under the figure of a *Tree*: as in Ps. lxxx. 8, &c. with which compare St. John xv. 1 to 8.) Isaiah i. 1 to 7. St. Matthew xxi. 33, 34. St. Mark xi.

<sup>j</sup> Jeremiah iv. 14.

<sup>k</sup> Heb. xiii. 15.



12 to 14. St. Luke xiii. 6 to 9. Especially are we reminded of St. Luke iii. 7, 8; a place which the Reader will probably think conclusive as to the meaning of the present passage.

### 34 O generation of vipers,

“Offspring of vipers,”—as St. John Baptist had also styled them, see St. Luke iii. 7; and the first note on the latter half of St. Luke iii. 8. The best commentary on this appellation is contained in St. Matthew xxiii.; where, in verses 30, 31, 32, our LORD reminds them of the actions of their Fathers: couples the children with the Parents; and ends with the most withering rebuke, in ver. 33.

Take notice that it was their favourite boast of being *Abraham's* seed<sup>1</sup>, which gives such amazing point to these denunciations of our LORD and of His Forerunner<sup>m</sup>. Observe also that it is thereby implied that they were of “their Father, *the Devil*,” —“that Old *Serpent* <sup>n</sup>.” Read, by all means, St. John viii. from ver. 33 to ver. 44.

how can ye, being evil, speak good things?  
for out of the abundance of the heart the  
35 mouth speaketh. A good man out of the

<sup>1</sup> St. Matth. iii. 9. St. John viii. 33, 39.

<sup>m</sup> St. Matthew iii. 7: xxiii. 33. St. Luke iii. 7.

<sup>n</sup> Rev. xii. 9: xx. 2: in connexion with which, consider St. Mark xvi. 18, and St. Luke x. 19.

good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

This recurs in St. Luke vi. 45, where see the note.

But I say unto you, that every idle word <sup>36</sup> that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment. For by <sup>37</sup> thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

A most solemn warning, truly. We are reminded of the prominent place given to the sins of that 'little member,' (the tongue), in St. James' Epistle. "If any man offend not *in word*," he says, "the same is a perfect man°!" Consider St. James i. 26: iii. 2 to 12: also Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13, (quoted in 1 St. Peter iii. 10): xvii. 3: xxxix. 1: cxli. 3, &c. The most thoughtful and profound of English Bishops made his *first* sermon—"On the Government of *the Tongue*."

The argument in the former verse is,—Not only for the 'evil things' which they utter, (that is, their blasphemous words,) shall men hereafter be called to judgment; but even of their *inconsiderate* and *unreal* words, shall they have to give account. "Idle," (literally "object-less," "useless,") seems to mean something *more* than "unprofitable," and *less* than "mischievous."

° St. James iii. 2.

- 38 Then certain of the Scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from Thee.

What they asked for, was, “a sign *from Heaven*.” See St. Luke xi. 16, and the note there. Such signs Moses<sup>p</sup>, Joshua<sup>q</sup>, Samuel<sup>r</sup>, and Elijah<sup>t</sup>, had shewn. The same request is made by the same persons in St. Matthew xvi. 1, and obtains the same reply,—in verse 4. Compare St. John ii. 18: (where see the note): and vi. 30. Consider also, 1 Cor. i. 22.

- 39 But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign: and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonas:

He calls them “adulterous,” because God had styled Himself the Husband of the Jewish Church<sup>u</sup>, had wedded that nation to Himself<sup>v</sup>; and yet they had turned away from Him, and gone after other gods<sup>w</sup>. . . . Now, he who loves most, is most jealous; hence, such language as is held in Zechariah i. 14: viii. 2, &c.

<sup>p</sup> Exodus xvi. 4, 15, referred to in St. John vi. 30 to 32.

<sup>q</sup> Joshua x. 12, 13.

<sup>r</sup> 1 Samuel xii. 16 to 18.

<sup>s</sup> 2 Kings i. 10 to 12.

<sup>t</sup> Isaiah liv. 5. Jeremiah xxxi. 32.

<sup>u</sup> Jeremiah iii. 14. Compare 2 Cor. xi. 2. Ephea. v. 23, &c. Revel. xix. 7: xxi. 2.

<sup>v</sup> Jeremiah iii. 2, 8, 9. Ezekiel xxiii. 11, &c.

for as Jonas was three days and three 40 nights in the whale's belly ;

Take notice that it is *our LORD* who tells us that it was '*a whale*' which swallowed His Prophet. (A whale: the only creature besides Man, whose creation is specially recorded!)\* In the History itself, we read only of "*a great fish*▼."

so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth.

Thus our SAVIOUR gave them a marvellous sign ; not "in the height above," but "in the depth ✕;" declaring the Prophet Jonah, "in the *heart* of the seas ♀," to have exhibited a type of His own descent into the Grave ; and of His Resurrection : for as Jonah "was restored alive unto the dry land again, so should the MESSIAS, after three days, be taken out of the jaws of Death, and restored unto the land of the living." Our LORD proceeds,—

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judg- 41  
ment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas ; and behold, a Greater than Jonas is here. The Queen of the 42  
South shall rise up in the Judgment with

\* See Genesis i. 21.

▼ Jonah i. 17.

✕ Isaiah vii. 11.

♀ See the margin of Jonah ii. 3.

this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the Earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a Greater than Solomon *is* here.

The men of sinful and idolatrous Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonah<sup>\*</sup>; and the Queen of Sheba, who came from far, although a heathen, to hear the wisdom of Solomon<sup>\*</sup>,—were the models of the converted and penitent Gentile world. But behold, One greater than either Jonah or the Queen of the South, was here; and yet, He won no credit at the hands of the very nation whom He came to save. In the day of Judgment, Nineveh and Saba would therefore prove the condemnation of the Jewish people. And what must be feared for that nation when their only SAVIOUR had been finally renounced? He proceeds Himself to describe the fate which awaited them: delivering on this occasion one of the most extraordinary of all His recorded sayings.

43 When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a man,

Take notice that this is said of "*a man*." At the end of verse 45, the warning is applied to the Jewish Nation: "Even so shall it be *also* unto this wicked generation." It may be, that, whatever is true of communities, applies, in a manner, to indi-

<sup>\*</sup> Jonah iii. 5 to 10.  
ix. 1, &c.

<sup>\*</sup> 1 Kings x. 1, &c., and 2 Chron.

viduals also. Mercifully, however, did the Divine Speaker so frame His Discourse, that the warning which He was about to deliver to the Jewish People, should first take an altogether *private* and *personal* form. Every baptized Christian, therefore, finds here a picture of his danger.

And the first thing to be noticed is, that a real *expulsion* of the evil Spirit is here spoken of. He is "gone out," because he is "*cast out*."<sup>b</sup> The Grace of Baptism also is *real*. There has been "a Death unto Sin, and a new Birth,"—(that is, *Regeneration*,)—"unto Righteousness." Henceforth, our prayer is that the baptized person may "*continue* CHRIST's," and "lead the rest of his life *according to this beginning*."

Observe that when God "did safely lead the children of Israel through the Red Sea, figuring thereby His *Holy Baptism*,"—it is expressly related that "Israel saw the Egyptians," their enemies, "*dead upon the sea shore*"<sup>d</sup>.

But our attention is invited to the behaviour of an unclean Spirit when it has been driven out of a man.

he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

Here is a wonderful statement! Behold, the veil is rent away, even by the Hand of the CREATOR

<sup>b</sup> See above, verses 24, 26, 27, 28.

<sup>c</sup> See the first prayer in the Baptismal service.

<sup>d</sup> Exodus xiv. 30.

Himself, from the unseen part of Creation; and we learn the behaviour of a fallen Angel,—an unclean Spirit, who had taken up his abode in a human body, but had been driven out from thence!

He is restless. “Rest” and “Quietness<sup>e</sup>,”—“sitting still<sup>f</sup>,” “patient abiding<sup>g</sup>,”—is the portion of the good: but “the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest . . . . There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked<sup>h</sup>.” . . . . The unclean Spirit “goes to and fro in the Earth,—walks up and down in it<sup>i</sup>,”—restless and miserable. He seeketh rest,—but findeth none. Consider the behaviour of the Demoniac, as described by St. Mark, v. 2 to 5: and by St. Luke, viii. 29.

But what are “dry,” (or, as it is here, “*waterless*”) places?” We gratefully accept the suggestion of a great writer:—“probably, the barren wilds of Heathenism, on which the dews of Grace have not descended; and where there are no shoots of Divine planting to corrupt or destroy<sup>k</sup>. *Then* it is that he bethinks himself of trying to regain his ancient habitation.”

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when

<sup>e</sup> Isaiah xxx. 15.

<sup>f</sup> Isaiah xxx. 7.

<sup>g</sup> Psalm ix. 18. Compare 1 St. Peter iii. 4, and Psalm xxxvii. 9.

<sup>h</sup> Isaiah lvii. 21. Compare xlviii. 22.

<sup>i</sup> Job i. 7, and ii. 2. Compare 1 St. Peter v. 8.

<sup>k</sup> Consider St. Luke viii. 6.

he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished.

So "empty, swept, and garnished" with all spiritual graces, did Satan find the Temple of the LORD's Body, after His Baptism,—when he made that fierce assault upon Him to which we give the name of "*the* Temptation." Not that there had been any expulsion of Evil in *that* case. God forbid! The very thought were blasphemous. But see the note on St. Luke iv. 1.

"Empty, swept, and garnished," doubtless, and in no ordinary manner, did the same accursed spirit find Judas Iscariot; when for three whole years He had followed the footsteps of the Holy One<sup>1</sup>. Yea, he had just received from his Divine Master's Hand the Bread of Life, and the Cup of salvation, when, (as for the second time we read,) "*Satan entered into him*"<sup>m</sup>." How solemn a warning for ourselves! See the note on St. John xiii. 27.

Then goeth he, and taketh with himself <sup>45</sup> even other spirits more wicked than himself,

Strange things are discovered to us here, at every step. We learn that there are degrees of wickedness in the evil Spirits; and these mainly in possession with proportionate power; see St. Matthew xvii. 21. We learn too that there is no small amount of plan and design on the part of the Devil and his evil agents, in order to

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxii. 3.

<sup>m</sup> St. John xiii. 27.



achieve their accursed purposes. Thus, to the possession of one miserable man, from whom CHRIST's power had expelled him, (without the injunction—"and *enter no more him<sup>n</sup>*,") we find an unclean Spirit making a league with "seven other spirits more wicked than self." Compare St. Luke viii. 2. Consider also Luke viii. 30, and see the note there. The Reader will find some additional remarks on the particulars in the note on St. Luke xi. 26.

Here the description ends; and we must supply the rest of the picture for ourselves. Evil suggestions, adapted to the age and sex, the peculiar character, habits, temper, pursuits, conditions, trials, multiplied, and varying, and various in some such form, doubt not that the attack was conducted. Then came the yielding: at first thought only; but this was all the Enemy desired. He did but want a small advantage: a breach in the wall, through which to effect an entrance. At last, in an unguarded hour, he achieved his wicked purpose. The band of evil Spirits have overpowered the man,—

and they enter in, and dwell there:

"Had that house been guarded by Watchfulness and Prayer, this sad result had been impossible. The good man watching against the evil approach, would not have suffered his house

<sup>n</sup> St. Mark ix. 25.

broken through<sup>o</sup>: and the Devil, resisted by the prayer of Faith, would have fled away<sup>p</sup>." The soul, aware of its weak points, and those parts of its nature against which old sins might most easily direct their attacks, should have kept a vigilant guard. But in the case before us there had been no watchfulness: no earnest cry to God, who, for CHRIST's sake, gives the aid of His Holy Spirit to all who ask Him<sup>q</sup>. And we behold the fearful consequence.

and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first.

"For," (as St. Peter declares,) "if after they have escaped the pollutions of the World, through the knowledge of the LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, they are again entangled therein, and overcome,—the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of Righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them<sup>r</sup>."

Such is the fearful commentary of the Spirit on a state of relapse into Sin. God of His Mercy preserve us from it! See more in the note on the last half of St. Luke xi. 26. Our LORD proceeds to shew the purpose with which He had delivered

<sup>o</sup> St. Luke xii. 39.      <sup>p</sup> St. James iv. 7.      <sup>q</sup> St. Luke xi. 13.  
Compare St. James i. 5, 6, 7; and the places in the margin.

<sup>r</sup> See 2 St. Peter ii. 20, 21 and following verses.

these memorable words; applying His remarks to the case of the Jewish Nation.

Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Like to the case of the individual just described, our LORD says would be the case of that 'wicked generation.' See the beginning of the first note on verse 43. The Kingdom of Heaven had come very nigh to them indeed<sup>a</sup>. The Enemy had been forcibly expelled from their borders. Fearful in proportion must be the relapse. The end of the matter was, that "the unclean spirits rushed in with sevenfold vigour and malignity, and made of Jerusalem before its fall a hell of confusion and misery, to which the Gentile world has no parallel."

- 46 While He yet talked to the people, behold, *His* Mother and *His* Brethren stood without,  
 47 desiring to speak with Him. Then one said unto Him, Behold, Thy Mother and Thy Brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee.

These were our Blessed LORD's cousins. See the note on St. Matthew xiii. 55. Not only cousins,—but uncles and nephews<sup>t</sup>, and indeed all near kinsmen, were accounted "brethren." A wise Bishop has bid us observe that, "although His

<sup>a</sup> See above, ver. 28.    <sup>t</sup> Genesis xiii. 8: xiv. 16: xxix. 12, 15. Levit. xxv. 48, 49.

Mother and His Brethren be named together, yet they are never called the sons of His Mother; and the question is not whether CHRIST had any brethren; but whether His Mother brought forth any more children."

But He answered and said unto him that  
old Him, Who is My Mother? and who are  
My Brethren? And He stretched forth His  
hand toward His Disciples, and said, Behold  
My Mother and My Brethren! For whoso-  
ever shall do the will of My FATHER which  
is in Heaven, the same is My Brother, and  
sister, and Mother.

See the concluding note on the third chapter of St. Mark's Gospel. The Reader is also referred to a few words on St. Luke viii. 21,—where our LORD is found to have repeated either the saying, or the sentiment, which He delivered on the present occasion. It cannot be necessary to point out that He thereby neither disclaimed the Mother who bore Him; nor spoke slightly of the most precious of earthly ties. He does not disparage Relationship; but He elevates Obedience. In the words of wise Bishop Pearson,—“since He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him, He admits no brotherhood but with such as do the same.”

## The Prayer.

**O** ALMIGHTY God, who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical Body of Thy Son CHRIST our LORD; Grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee: through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

## PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER OF

**St. Matthew's Gospel.**

8 *The parable of the Sower and the seed: 18 the exposition of it.*  
 24 *The parable of the Tares, 31 of the Mustard seed, 33 of the*  
*Leaven, 44 of the hidden Treasure, 45 of the Pearl, 47 of the Draw-*  
*net cast into the sea: 53 and how CHRIST is contemned of His*  
*own countrymen.*

THIS Chapter is the very Treasury of Parables. Seven parables are here found together. So rich a cluster,—‘so many and so costly pearls,’—are nowhere else in the Gospels to be seen ‘strung upon a single thread.’

XIII. THE same day went JESUS out of<sup>1</sup> the house, and sat by the sea side. And<sup>2</sup> great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

The ‘Great multitudes’ on the shore, were doubtless the cause why our SAVIOUR ‘went into a Ship:’ they must have thronged and crowded Him. Moreover, no position more convenient

for His Divine purpose can be conceived, than the position which He chose. Yet, doubt not but what the act was full of mysterious significance as well; for not our LORD's sayings only, but His acts were parables also. *That Ship* offers a perpetual type of the Church,—in which CHRIST is; and where, 'without a parable' He may be said not to speak. But hereafter, all will be made plain,—as was the case *then* also. See St. Mark iv. 34. Consider also St. Mark iv. 11.

3 And He spake many things unto them in parables, saying,

Our LORD proceeded 'to open His Mouth in parables,—to utter things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world.' See ver. 35, and the note there. That is, He now delivered Divine Instruction under the form of Comparisons drawn from natural objects. This method was not unusual in the East. Three famous specimens are supplied in the Old Testament, by Jotham's parable of the Trees<sup>a</sup>, (though *that* is rather a Fable than a Parable,)—Nathan's parable of the Ewe-lamb<sup>b</sup>,—and the woman of Tekoah's parable<sup>c</sup>. It is not asserted indeed that the Blessed Speaker had never spoken a parable before; (for we know that He *had*;) yet is the present clearly set before us as *the beginning* of

<sup>a</sup> Judges ix. 7 to 15.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Samuel xii. 1 to 4.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Samuel xiv. 5 to 7.

parables, in a certain sense. In other words, our LORD commenced from this time *the practice* of teaching in parables; and, as the inquiry of the Disciples in ver. 10, suggests, it was a new thing with Him to deliver Instruction in this form.

The parable of 'the Sower,' therefore, with which the Divine Speaker commences, is entitled to very unusual attention. Its exceeding importance, its depth and fulness of wonder, may not for an instant be doubted: nor is it hard to perceive many of its claims thus to lie at the foundation of "all parables:"—see St. Mark iv. 13. It treats of the main thing of all,—God's Holy Word; and the reception which it meets with among mankind. A mirror is thus held up to us, in which we behold ourselves, and the dangers which surround us: at the same time, by the illustration which our Blessed LORD employs, we are taught what manner of persons we *ought* to be.

On the present parable, only a few remarks are offered in this place. Fuller notes will be found in the Commentary on St. Mark's iv<sup>th</sup>. chapter,—verses 3 to 9, and 14 to 20: and the reader is referred, once for all, to what is there written; as well as to the notes on St. Luke viii. 1 to 8, and 11 to 15.

Behold, a Sower went forth to sow;

'Went forth,'—as did our LORD from 'the bosom of the FATHER,' at His Incarnation. See the note on St. Mark iv. 3.



- 4 and when he sowed, some *seeds* fell  
the way side, and the fowls came and  
voured them up :

Observe, it is not said that the Sower *sowed*  
seed—by the way, on the rock, among thorns  
and into good ground : but that it “*fell*” the  
seed. The Sower sowed well. It was *the soil* which  
was evil.

- 5 Some fell upon stony places, where there  
had not much earth : and forthwith they  
sprung up, because they had no deepness  
6 earth. And when the sun was up, they  
were scorched ; and because they had  
no root, they withered away.

See the notes on St. Mark iv. 4 and 6.

- 7 And some fell among thorns ; and  
the thorns sprung up, and choked them :

“ So then, *this* is not all,—to have the Word  
and to hear it ; as if that would serve our souls  
and save us, as we commonly fancy. Multitudes  
under the continual sound of the Word, yet  
remain lifeless and fruitless, and die in their sin.  
See the note on St. Mark iv. 7.

- 8 But other fell into good ground, and  
brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold,  
some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

Consider what is implied thereby : namely, *the abundant fruits* of Faith, — *the mighty harvest* of good works,—which the Word of God is expected to produce in all of us, who hear ! And his is, doubtless, the view of the question which concerns us most.

But those whose office it is to teach, will do well further to reflect, that the three degrees of success enumerated, are, severally, the rewards, —(let us never be so presumptuous as to call them the *results*,)—of different degrees of care bestowed upon the soil by the Husbandman. Great pains and care are requisite to procure even the lowest rate of increase :—far more toil must be expended, if he would earn a double blessing. But, (in the language of the Farm), it must be *Spade-Husbandry*,—nay more, there must be pains bestowed on each individual plant, —if the Spiritual Husbandman would secure the increase which attended Isaac's sowing. See Genesis xxvi. 12.

See more, in the note on St. Mark iv. 8.

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. 9

In the success which the Seed met with, there had been great variety, we see ; yet only *one* Seed,—only *one* Sower ! “ In hearing of the Word,” (as a pious writer has remarked,) “ men look usually too much upon men ; and forget from what spring the Word hath its power. They observe too narrowly the different hand of the

sowers, and too little depend on His hand, who is LORD of both Seed-time and Harvest." In other words, they think not enough of God: and they attend not enough to *themselves*.

Let these, and the like reflections be ours, as often as we read the parables of our SAVIOUR CHRIST. So shall we best shew ourselves mindful of the memorable warning of the SPIRIT, in ver. 9: concerning which, see the note on St. Mark iv. 9.

- 10 And the Disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?

This took place afterwards,—in the House. See St. Mark iv. 10, and the note there.

- 11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given.

What St. Matthew, throughout his Gospel, calls 'the Kingdom of *Heaven*,'—that, the other Evangelists call 'the Kingdom of *GOD*.'—The phrase is used with different shades of meaning; but it generally denotes the Gospel Dispensation,—of which the Christian Church is the greatest material feature.

"*The Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven*,"—denotes all those particulars respecting the nature

and history of the Gospel Dispensation, which had been for so many ages kept secret, but which were now at last about to be revealed. Consider the following texts,—Romans xvi. 25, 26. 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8. Ephes. iii. 9, 10. Coloss. i. 26.—Take notice however, that it was through no partiality on the part of ALMIGHTY GOD,—no arbitrary and blind decree,—that the Apostles were given to know those “Mysteries.” Be sure of *that*. The reason of this favour shewn them by our LORD, follows in the next verse: and see the note on ver. 13.

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, 12 and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

So that, in reward of what the Disciples “*had*,”—call it Faith, or Love, or Use of Opportunities, or Improvement of Privileges,—more and more Blessings are promised. The opposite state is denoted by the expression, “*hath not*.” *Something*, indeed, even the wicked man hath, perforce; yet is it a mere unreality,—a thing, which deserves not the name of a possession. Scarcely indeed can he be said to “*have*” it. He but “*seemeth to have*,”—as it is said in St. Luke viii. 18. Whatever it may be, it “shall be taken away” from him.

A most precious promise,—a most solemn and

emphatic warning also, truly ; which are found to have been uttered by our LORD on at least three different occasions. Compare the language of St. Luke viii. 18 ; and see the note on St. Mark iv. 25.

The Jewish nation, as a body, heard our LORD's Discourses indeed, but closed their hearts against the Heavenly Doctrine which they contained. They beheld His Humanity, but refused to discern therein His Divinity.

- 13 Therefore speak I to them in Parables ; because they seeing see not ; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

It is here declared therefore, that those who—blessed, as these men had been, with the sight and hearing of ‘ things kept secret from the foundation of the world<sup>d</sup>,’—would neither see nor hear the things which concerned their peace, should be punished, by having the mysteries of the Gospel henceforth exhibited to them under a veil and darkly. As St. Mark expresses it,—“that seeing they may see, and not perceive ; and hearing they may hear, and not understand<sup>e</sup>.” In other words, they were threatened with what is called *judicial blindness*. Thus, after Pharaoh, (a great example of Sin in the Old Testament), had hardened his own heart five times in succession, in resistance to the

<sup>d</sup> See below ver. 35, and the note there.

<sup>e</sup> St. Mark iv. 12.

ALMIGHTY <sup>f</sup>,—we are expressly told that, next, GOD *hardened his heart* <sup>g</sup>.

Thus, then, our LORD explains His adoption of Parables as a means of Instruction. In reply to which, it will perhaps be thought that, in point of fact, His Parables were yet (in a manner) plain and clear;—that they often set forth His Divine meaning with greater point and force than could have been attained by any other method. Nor is this denied. But a doctrine, or a precept, or a future event, shadowed forth under the veil of a Parable, is yet a hidden thing,—revealed only to those who have ‘ears to hear.’ And in this *symbolic manner*, as it seems, did our Divine LORD set forth prophetically the course of His future treatment of the Jewish nation;—as well as explain to mankind how He deals with individual hearts. In illustration of what has been said, it may be pointed out that the prophecy in Malachi iii. 1,—which, in a certain sense, doubtless, is yet future, was fulfilled, in a degree, by the incident recorded in St. Matthew xxi. 12 : and yet more faintly, but no less truly, in that more noiseless, yet equally sudden coming, described by St. Luke —ii. 22. In the same manner, our LORD’s *first* Advent was symbolical of His *second*.

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of 14 Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall

<sup>f</sup> Exodus vii. 22 : viii. 15, 19, 32 : ix. 7.

<sup>g</sup> Exodus ix. 12, (compare iv. 21 ; vii. 3), 35 : x. 20, 27 : ‘xi. 10.

hear, and shall not understand ; and seeing  
15 ye shall see, and shall not perceive : for  
this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their*  
ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they  
have closed ; lest at any time they should  
see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears,  
and should understand with *their* heart,  
and should be converted, and I should heal  
them.

The quotation is from Isaiah vi. 9, 10: and surely the declaration is a very remarkable one, that these words,—spoken originally of the Jewish people by Isaiah the prophet,—should have had so perfect an application to the same nation in the days of MESSIAH, that the prophecy could be said to have been then *fulfilled*. St. John and St. Paul, on two memorable occasions, so applied the words of the Evangelical Prophet<sup>h</sup>.

Well worthy of notice are those words,—“ *Their eyes they have closed.*” The SPIRIT thus speaks because the human Will is free. If men sin, it is because *they prefer* Darkness to Light.

“Lest they should be converted and I should heal them :”—which proves that Conversion, (that is, Repentance,) was possible for them ; and that Salvation would have followed on their Repentance. Compare the last words of St. Mark iv. 12.

<sup>h</sup> See St. John xii. 39, 40 : and Acts xxviii. 25 to 27.

But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see ; 16  
and your ears, for they hear. For verily I 17  
say unto you, That many prophets and  
righteous *men* have desired to see *those*  
*things* which ye see, and have not seen  
*them* ; and to hear *those things* which ye  
hear, and have not heard *them*.

A wondrous statement on the lips of Him who  
had been "the Desire of all Nations,"—whose  
"Day" Abraham had "seen<sup>1</sup>,"—and all the Patri-  
archs and Prophets<sup>2</sup> had, in a manner, descried ;  
—but only "afar off<sup>1</sup>," and dimly. "Wherefore"  
(in the words of our VIIth Article) "they are  
not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers  
did look only for transitory promises." How bold  
is that saying of Ignatius, second bishop of An-  
tioch ;—"CHRIST is *the Door*, through which enter  
in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Pro-  
phets, and the Apostles, and the Church !"

Hear ye therefore the Parable of the 18  
Sower.

Notice, by the way, that our LORD here supplies  
us with *the title* of a Parable. His Disciples fur-  
nish us with the title of another in ver. 36.

When any one heareth the Word of the 19  
Kingdom, and understandeth *it* not,

<sup>1</sup> St. John viii. 56.

<sup>2</sup> See 1 St. Peter i. 10 to 12.

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews xi. 13.



These words are peculiar to the present Gospel. They describe a heart which opens not to receive the heavenly seed: but presents an obdurate surface. See below ver. 23: also the note on St. Mark v. 21.

Observe that the explanation of the parable begins somewhat differently in St. Mark's Gospel, — ch. 14: where see the note.

Then cometh the Wicked One, and catcheth every seed which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

See the note on St. Mark iv. 15.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the Word,  
21 and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended.

See the note on St. Mark iv. 16.

"Anon, *with joy* receiveth it." Let us dwell for a moment on this picture. Happy they, who have not experienced its truth, in a degree, in their own persons! No wonder, if the 'Word of the Kingdom,' especially if skilfully and sensibly delivered, pleases. It hath a ravishing beauty

and sweetness of its own, which cannot fail to please. "Let it be but a fancy," says Leighton, "yet it is a fine pleasant one . . . . The Description of the New Jerusalem<sup>m</sup>, suppose it to be but a dream, or one of the Visions of the Night, yet, it is passing fine; it must needs please a mind that heeds what is said of it." As the LORD declared to Ezekiel, His prophet,—“Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument<sup>n</sup>.”

But it is there added,—“They *hear* thy words, but they *do* them not.” And “so here, it is heard ‘with joy,’ and springs up presently. Men commend it, and, it may be, repeat some passages; yea, possibly, desire to be like it,—to have such and such graces as are recommended,—and straightway think they have them. And to all appearance, some change is wrought; but it is not deep enough.” Consider Balaam’s wish, in Numb. xxiii. 10, and compare it with Balaam’s end.

He also that received seed among the 22 thorns is he that heareth the Word; and the care of this World, and the deceitfulness of Riches, choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful.

“Cares” and “Riches,”—these, then, are the “thorns and briars” which prove so fatal to the

<sup>m</sup> Revel. xxi.

<sup>n</sup> Ezekiel xxxiii. 32.

growth of the spiritual life! "Break up your fallow ground," spake the LORD by His prophet, to the men of Judah and Jerusalem; "and *sow not among thorns*°."

"The *deceitfulness* of Riches:"—*that* must be because "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition<sup>p</sup>."

See the note on St. Mark iv. 19.

- 23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the Word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Take notice, that this last is the case of one "that heareth the Word and *understandeth it*" :—the opposite case, therefore, to that mentioned in ver. 19.

And further let it be remarked, before we pass on, that there is no reason why the three evil states before described, should not in the end, by God's Grace, be brought to resemble this: even by the influence upon them *of that very Word* whose fruitfulness they, at first, prevented. "He that plougheth should *plough in hope*<sup>q</sup>,"—is expressly said of the Ministerial Labourer. The

° Jeremiah iv. 3.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 9.

<sup>q</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 10.

barren highway may therefore yet become the yielding furrow. And why may not the rock be crushed,—the thorns, yet given to the burning? “Is not My Word *like a fire*? saith the LORD; and *like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces*?”

See the note on St. Mark iv. 20.

Another Parable put He forth unto them, 24 saying,

The parable of ‘the Tares’ follows; in which, a very instructive and striking circumstance is lost sight of, in consequence of the word here employed by our Translators. *Tares* are easily distinguished from Wheat: but the plant which grows among the corn so abundantly in Palestine,—(here called ‘Tares,’ because *that* is the nearest word which our language supplies,) is *so like Wheat in appearance* that a careless eye would hardly detect the difference. When closely examined, however, the plant is found to have no corns in the ear: it is a mere barren bearded husk. How apt a type is thereby furnished of the wicked,—growing up among the just, and, outwardly at least, not to be distinguished from them!

But the beauty of the Divine image is yet more striking. Wheat and Tares are plants *of a different kind*: but the plant which our LORD speaks of, (here called Tares,) is only a degenerate kind of Wheat. Let it not be said therefore that some are *created* for the burning; while others are des-

tinued for the Heavenly Garner,—‘elect’ from t  
Birth. For the present parable gives no co  
tenance to so monstrous an opinion; which i  
fact, refuted by almost every page of Scriptur

The Kingdom of Heaven is likened u  
a Man which sowed good seed in his fiel

We shall be told in ver. 37, that the ‘r  
here described is ‘the Son of Man;’ and  
‘the field is the World.’ He is called *an* ‘*Ho*  
*holder*’ in ver. 27. And *that* is because, tho  
all the Field is God’s, yet hath He a H  
within it, in which He chiefly delights to dwell

25 but while men slept, His Enemy c  
and sowed Tares among the Wheat,  
went his way.

“While men *slept*”! We are warned the  
against sloth and supineness, which give  
Enemy occasion,—both in respect of others  
of ourselves.

“*Sowed Tares.*” Take notice that this wa  
chance growth,—the result of careless Husband  
as when Tares infest *our* cornfields. (“V  
could have been done more . . . that I have  
done?”—may the Divine Husbandman well s  
But the plant described above, in the first  
on ver. 24, was the result of *active mischief* on  
part of the Enemy. Such wickedness is sai

Isaiah v. 4.

be practised to this day, in some parts of the world.

Here, then, is a prophecy of the speedy growth of error, ('all things that offend,'—as it is said in ver. 41,) after the sowing of the good seed :—and since error cannot exist apart from erring men ; nor sin, apart from sinners ; it amounts to a declaration that 'they which do iniquity' would soon be found in the Church, mixed up, and growing side by side, with the righteous. 'The Children of the Wicked One,' as it is said in ver. 38, mixed up with 'the Children of the Kingdom.'—It is further declared that the Enemy, who should be the author of all this evil, 'is the Devil.' He did the mischief, and departed.

But when the blade was sprung up, and 26 brought forth fruit, then appeared the Tares also.

Observe, that the Tares are discovered by the fruitfulness of the Wheat !

Thus, then, it is prophesied that the hypocrites, and the openly wicked, shall be seen standing side by side with those who bring forth much fruit. And this mixed aspect which the Church presented from the very beginning,—has presented in all ages,—presents at this time,—and will continue to present to the end of the World, is much to be noted as one of the things which our LORD distinctly foretold ; and of which He here forewarns us. It was set forth in type,—by

Noah's Ark, which contained alike clean and unclean beasts: *in vision*,—by the great sheet which St. Peter saw let down from Heaven, wherein were all manner of beasts: *in comparison*,—by the threshing-floor, whereon is laid wheat and chaff: and by the great House, in which there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour some to dishonour<sup>†</sup>: *in parable*,—by the sheep and the goats; the net which contained fish of every kind; the tares which grew among the wheat.

We may not separate from the Church, therefore, on pretence of belonging to some holier society within it. This is *Schism*. We thereby, in effect, put ourselves *out* of the Church, and endanger our own Salvation. We are guilty of great presumption, and self-conceit. We pretend to know the secrets of other men's hearts; whereas a little reflexion might convince us that we know not the secrets of our own. The LORD “searcheth all hearts<sup>‡</sup>,” and “The LORD—*knoweth them that are His*<sup>§</sup>.” Let this thought suffice us.

True indeed it is that “the King's Daughter is all glorious within<sup>¶</sup>,” but this glory of the Church is hidden from men's eyes. The Church Catholic, (that is the Church *universal*), is also ‘*Holy*,’—as we assert in the Apostles' Creed; but this means not that every one, visibly in

<sup>†</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 20.

<sup>‡</sup> 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

<sup>§</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.

<sup>¶</sup> Psalm xlv. 13.

communion with her, is holy also. True moreover it is, that into "the Holy Jerusalem," "there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth:" but only "they which are written in the LAMB'S Book of Life". All this, however, will be *hereafter* and not now. The "Holy City, New Jerusalem", the "glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing", is the Church,—not "militant," as it is "here in Earth;" but *triumphant*, as it will hereafter be, in *Heaven*.

See more in the note on ver. 38.

So the servants of the Householder came and said unto Him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it Tares?

'The Servants of the Householder' are not the same with 'the Reapers,'—for the two are distinguished in ver. 30. These last are declared to be 'the Angels,'—to whom the care of *all the field* is entrusted. Compare Zechariah vi. 4 to 7: Daniel x. 13, 21: xii. 1, &c. But the Servants, inhabiting the House<sup>c</sup>,—will be such as "Simon Peter, a Servant and an Apostle of JESUS CHRIST<sup>d</sup>;" and "James, a Servant of God, and of the LORD JESUS CHRIST<sup>e</sup>;" and "Paul, a Servant of JESUS CHRIST<sup>f</sup>:" with their successors, to the end of

<sup>a</sup> Rev. xxi. 10, 27.

<sup>a</sup> Rev. xxi. 2.

<sup>b</sup> Ephes. v. 27.

<sup>c</sup> See the last note on ver. 24.

<sup>d</sup> 2 St. Peter i. 1.

<sup>e</sup> St. James i. 1.

<sup>f</sup> Romans i. 1.



the world. 'The Servants of the Householder,' are in fact, the faithful, generally. And take note that the sight of wickedness, or rather, *the origin of Evil*, fills these with perplexity. "Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? *From whence* then hath it tares?"—words, which are a prophecy of the disquiet which ensued at the Church's discovery of error within her pale; and which, in fact, nearly rent her in sunder.

- 28 He said unto them, An Enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

So zealous for God's Honour are His faithful Servants!

Compare the language of 'the sons of Thunder,'—in St. Luke ix. 54. Consider, again, the remonstrance of the Prophet Jeremiah,—xii. 1 to 4:—the complaint of the Psalmist,—lxxiii. 12 to 14:—and, earlier yet, the inquiry of holy Job,—xxi. 7 to 15. Take notice, further, that these 'Servants of the Householder,' had the present fate of the wicked been left to them, would assuredly have 'gone and gathered up the Tares,' forthwith.—"Up, Lord, and let not man have the upper hand!" Such has been the impatient language of God's Saints in all ages. The very souls beneath the altar, "of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the Testimony which they

ε Psalm ix. 19.

held," are found to cry, with a loud voice,—“How long, O LORD, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the Earth <sup>b</sup>?” Contrast this with the voice of Angels, —Zech. i. 12.

But he said, Nay ; lest while ye gather 29 up the Tares, ye root up also the Wheat with them.

Partly, because there is a risk of even mistaking the one for the other ; partly, (and chiefly,) because there is such entanglement between the good and the wicked,—the one are so entwined with the other,—that to effect a severance, without fatally disturbing the former, would be next to impossible.

Consider how this same doctrine is set forth by the comparison of the evil and the just to chaff and wheat ; which *cannot*, in fact, be severed till ‘the Harvest.’ They grow on one and the same stem. In a certain sense, they make part of each other ; and are essential, the one to the other.

This reply of ‘the Householder,’ therefore, recommends the Grace of *Patience* ; concerning which, see the end of the note on St. Matthew iv. 7, and the references there.—It further suggests that a great and admitted evil must sometimes be endured, rather than that the safety of that which is certainly good, should be endangered.

<sup>b</sup> Revelation vi. 9, 10.

30 Let both grow together until the Harvest: and in the time of Harvest I will say to the Reapers, Gather ye together first the Tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the Wheat into My barn.

Now, 'the Harvest is the end of the World,'—as we read in ver. 39: 'and the Reapers are the Angels.'—The interpretation of this verse is found below, from verse 40 to verse 43.

Note here, the long-suffering goodness of God: "Let both grow together." Let both, for the present, share the same rain, and dew, and sunshine: "for He maketh His Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust<sup>1</sup>." But does this proceed from *indifference* on His part? God forbid! From some defect in the Divine contrivance, then, which makes interference impossible? Far from it. The reason of the delay is expressly given by St. Paul, in Romans ii. 4;—and St. Peter alludes to that passage in his 'beloved brother's' Epistle, in 2 St. Peter iii. 9 and 15.—All this is but for a time, however. "He hath appointed a Day, in the which He will judge the World in righteousness<sup>2</sup>."

"Into *bundles*." Does this perhaps denote the different classes of offenders?—Concerning the

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew v. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 31.

'Barn,' see the latter part of St. Matthew iii. 12, and the note there.

Another Parable put He forth unto them, 31 saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of Mustard seed, which a Man took, and sowed in His field :

*Seed* is again made the instrument of Heavenly teaching. The same 'man' also again comes before us,—and we are again reminded of the 'Field' which was his. See above, the latter part of ver. 24, and the note there. This Parable, however, is entirely given by St. Mark,—iv. 30 to 32; and has been so fully remarked upon in the notes there, that it becomes unnecessary to say anything concerning it, in this place. For its connexion with what goes before, see the concluding note on the present Chapter.

which indeed is the least of all seeds : 32 but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

See the notes on St. Mark iv. 31, 32.

A parable follows, which, like the rest, also relates to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is found to recur, like the preceding parable, in the xiii<sup>th</sup> chapter of St. Luke. See the note on St. Luke xiii. 21.

83 Another Parable spake He unto them :  
The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto Leaven ; which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Our LORD speaks of Himself under the image of a Woman, also in the parable of the Lost piece of Silver, St. Luke xv. 8. And as if to glorify all lowly occupations, on this occasion, as on *that*, it is a woman engaged in a poor domestic task. There,—she sweeps the House : here,—she mixes leaven with meal !

Take notice, then, that she “*hides*” the leaven in the meal : which reminds us of the relation of the Church with respect to the World. At first, it was a thing wholly hidden ; and even now, the Great Reality is wondrously obscured,—in large Cities especially. Notice the language of ver. 44.

Yet, what follows ? “*till the whole was leavened.*” Here, then, is a prophecy of what will be hereafter ; and which has already come to pass, in a degree. It is implied that, by virtue of the law of its nature, the Church of CHRIST must spread and make its way. As Leaven, when hid in meal, secretly and silently pervades the whole lump,—even so does it fare with the Gospel. It possesses moreover a *transforming power* : so acting upon the thing it encounters, that, in the end, “the whole is leavened ;” becomes changed, and partakes of another nature.

This property of Leaven, our LORD alluded to on another occasion,—when He warned His Disciples against “*the Doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees*”<sup>1</sup>.

But why is it said, “*Three measures of meal*?” May it be because the great divisions of the Earth are anciently looked upon as so many? Or is it because the individual Man is made up of “*Spirit, and Soul, and Body*?”—as we are so often reminded? Or is it only because the threefold division is so favourite an one with the SPIRIT—containing, as it does, a perpetual reference to the mystery of the Blessed Trinity? . . . . Traces of it may be found in every part of Scripture,—from Genesis to Revelation.

Lastly, it is right, in considering a parable, to notice its private and personal teaching,—as well as its general, and national application. The parable of the Leaven reminds us of our need of that “*daily renewal*” by God’s Holy Spirit, which we pray for in the Collect for Christmas-Day. It is not enough to have received the Heavenly Gift of Holy Baptism. Its influence must be continual upon the heart and life; until the Christian has undergone that Transfiguration into the likeness of his LORD, of which the Great Apostle speaks,—2 Corinthians iii. 18.

All these things spake JESUS unto the 34

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xvi. 6, 11, 12.

multitude in Parables ; and without a Parable spake He not unto them :

St. Mark,—iv. 33,—adds, that “ *with many such parables* spake He the Word unto them, as they were able to bear it.”

- 35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables ; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the World.

Surely, a most surprising statement ! To read Psalm lxxviii. 2, *who* would suppose that the scope of the Writer reached on, so far ? . . . Yet is this no solitary example of the *unexpected* fulfilment of prophetic sayings. See the notes on St. Matthew iv. 14 : St. Luke i. 27, and ii. 38 ; and on St. Matthew xxvii. 9, 10.

Take notice that ‘the Prophet’ here spoken of was ‘Asaph the Seer<sup>m</sup>,’ a Levite, who lived in the time of David the King<sup>n</sup>.

- 36 Then JESUS sent the multitude away, and went into the house.

St. Mark here adds,—“and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His Disciples<sup>o</sup>.” One specimen of Divine Exposition has been already given,—ver. 10 to 23. Another, follows.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Chron. xv. 17, 19, &c.

<sup>o</sup> St. Mark iv. 34.

It is probable that the Disciples obtained from our SAVIOUR an explanation of each of His parables.

And His Disciples came unto Him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the Tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, <sup>37</sup> He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man :

It seems impossible to over-estimate the preciousness of what follows. How perplexed should we for ever have been,—and how uncertain as to the actual intention of our LORD's parables,—had He not thus graciously explained two, at such length, Himself!

The field is the World :

38

The Field, then, (it may be said by some one who reads the note on verse 25,) is not *the Church*, but *the World*! What becomes therefore of the teaching drawn from this parable in the note just referred to? The objection is almost as ancient as the parable.

But the answer is almost as obvious as the objection, and quite as ancient. *Of course* it was the World,—not the Church, but *the World*,—where the seed was sown: but the seed was no sooner sown, than the foundations of *the Church*, (the 'Kingdom of Heaven,' as it is called in ver. 24), were laid; and when the blade was sprung up, since it covered *the Field*, there began to be a



“Holy Church universal *throughout the World.*” Then it was that *the Tares* began to shew themselves ;—so closely resembling the wheat, and so entangled with it, that it was impossible to separate them. How could the admixture of evil with good, in the visible Church, have been more aptly set forth ? The parable testifies to the great Truth that all *within* the Church are not *of* it : it admits, or rather asserts, that many who profess and call themselves Christians, do not deserve the name : but it contains a no less solemn warning against those who would separate themselves from the Church, on the plea that it is not *all* Holy. It removes all ground of surprise at the sad spectacle we daily witness ; for it is nothing less than a *Prophecy* that so it would be.

the good seed are the Children of the Kingdom ; but the Tares are the Children of the Wicked One ;

To be ‘*the children* of the Kingdom,’ &c. means those who will *inherit* the Kingdom ; that is, *the just*. Consider the following texts, St. Matthew xxiii. 15. St. Luke x. 6 : xvi. 8 : xx. 36. 1 Thess. v. 5.

39 the Enemy that sowed them is the Devil:

He means not that their life or faculties,—but all by which they are wicked, and fitted for Eternal punishment, is the work of the Evil Spirit : ‘while everything that is good in any, and affects

their growth to everlasting Salvation,' is from the FATHER of Lights; bestowed on them in, and through His SON,—who is the CREATOR of all things.

the Harvest is the end of the World; and the reapers are the Angels. As therefore 40 the Tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

Compare what is said in St. Matthew xv. 13.

The Son of Man shall send forth His 41 Angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

"Things *that offend*"—"scandals," as it is said in the margin,)—are all hindrances to Salvation, literally *stumbling-blocks*, which are thrown in the way of Believers. He that tempts another to sin, is, in the language of Scripture, a *stumbling-block* in his way. Hence our LORD's awful rebuke to Simon Peter,—in St. Matthew xvi. 23; where the same word occurs which our LORD employs in this place.

and shall cast them into a furnace of 42 fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

An ancient Archbishop, who spoke so eloquently that he was styled 'John of the Golden

Mouth,' has a beautiful remark on this. "Behold," he says, "the unspeakable Love of God towards men! He is quick to shew Mercy—slow to punish. When He sows, [—see above, ver. 37,—] He sows Himself; when He punishes, *He punishes by others*,—sending His Angels to do *that*."

See the note on St. Matthew viii. 12.

- 43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

"As *the Sun*:" for that is the brightest object in Creation. They will "shine out;" as the sun does, when the clouds have rolled away. The future condition of the glorified body is always spoken of as exceeding bright and glorious. Consider the following striking passages:—St. Matthew xvii. 2, with which compare Revel. i. 16, and Acts xxvi. 13.—Daniel xii. 3. 1 Cor. xv. 41.

The parable of 'the Hid Treasure' follows; and then, the parable of 'the Pearl.' Take notice, that they were delivered *in the House*,—unlike those which go before. The Disciples alone, therefore, hear them. And it is worth observing that they are, so to say, of a private and personal kind. They set forth how men ought individually to feel towards the Gospel; and stimulate the affections rather than inform the mind.

- 44 Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto Treasure hid in a field;

*Treasure:*—consider Psalm xix. 10 : cxix. 72, Proverbs viii. 10, 11, 19. Compare Coloss. ii. 3.

*Treasure hid:*—see the note on ver. 33. “*In* *ld:*”—see verses 24 and 31, and the note on former place.

he which when a man hath found,

very word here is precious. “Which when a man hath *found*.” but it is he that *seeketh*, who *findeth*. “Yea, if thou criest after Knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for Understanding; if thou *seekest* her as Silver, and *searchest* for her, thou shalt *find hid Treasures*; then shalt thou understand Fear of the LORD, and find the Knowledge of *God*.” In the Book of Proverbs, Wisdom is the gift of CHRIST: so that the Wise King, (like the Apostle,) here speaks of “winning CHRIST.” Compare Job iii. 21.

he hideth ;

Mark the conduct of the sincere Believer. He does not *talk* much about his Faith and Hope. He rather “hideth” the matter in his heart. Compare Psalm cxix. 11. Our inner life is “*hid* in CHRIST in God.” It is “the *hidden* man of the heart.”

Not, of course, that it is the nature of true

St. Matthew vii. 8.

<sup>a</sup> Proverbs ii. 3 to 5.

Phil. iii. 8.

<sup>b</sup> Coloss. iii. 3.

<sup>c</sup> 1 St. Peter iii. 4.

Faith to keep the knowledge of CHRIST, *a secret*. God forbid ! “ Andrew *findeth his brother Simon* :” and “ Philip *findeth Nathanael* ” :” and the woman of Samaria leaveth her water-pot, and goeth her way into the City, “ and saith to the men, *Come, see*.” It is ever thus. But it is one thing to burn for the Salvation of others, and to have a mighty zeal for CHRIST ; quite another thing to relate ‘ experiences,’ and to wear one’s Religion on one’s *lip*,—rather than in one’s *heart*. It should be hid,—only *that it may not be lost*.

and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Godliness hath “ promise of the life that now is,” as well as “ of that which is to come.” The man in the Parable wanted to obtain the Treasure ; he obtained the field, (that is the World,) as well. “ Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God,”—(the very thing this man was seeking!)—“ and His Righteousness ; *and all these things shall be added* unto you !”

Take notice, however, that it was the Treasure,—and *the Treasure only*,—which the man in the Parable wanted. The field he regarded as an incumbrance,—a joyless barren waste. He would have possessed himself of the Treasure by itself, if he could ; but he could not. Nor let us fail to ob-

<sup>u</sup> St. John i. 41, 45

<sup>v</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 8.

<sup>x</sup> St. John iv. 28, 29.

<sup>z</sup> St. Matthew vi. 33.

serve the great truth thus set before us, that the two cannot be separated. We may not, on *this* side of Eternity, possess the Treasure apart from the Field, (that is, the World,) wherein it is hid.

Observe the temper of mind in which the man in the parable divests himself of all his goods. He is *joyous*. So then, "Joy" is another attribute of the true Believer. Consider the following texts:—Romans xii. 12 : xiv. 17 : xv. 3. 2 Cor. vi. 10. Galat. v. 22. Phil. i. 4 : iii. 1 : iv. 4. 1 Thess. i. 6 : v. 16 : 1 St. Peter i. 8 : iv. 13, &c.

Lastly, observe what is here implied. The man must part with everything else which he possesses, in order, that he may become possessed of this one chief Treasure : and he *knows* that he must. The parable assumes this fact, and implies this knowledge. He waits for no summons<sup>a</sup> : he prepares to do his part at once, with *joy*<sup>b</sup>. "What things were gain to me," says the Apostle, "those I counted loss for CHRIST : yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD<sup>c</sup>."

But, (some one will say,) was this an honourable and a commendable course, on the part of him who made so singular a discovery? Was it *honest* to buy a 'Field,' knowing all the while that it contained a 'Treasure,' which made it worth so much more? Doubtless it was not : neither does

<sup>a</sup> See St. Matt. xix. 21.

<sup>b</sup> Compare St. Matthew iv. 20, 22 : ix. 9 : xix. 27, &c.

<sup>c</sup> Philip. iii. 7, 8.

our LORD say that it was. But the morality of the man's conduct forms no part of the teaching of the Parable. The *point* of the matter is the man's eagerness to become possessed of the Treasure: or rather, the greatness of the Treasure of which he became possessed. If the man's conduct is to be further scrutinized, surely it becomes an instructive example of the great truth which our LORD delivered on another occasion; namely, that "the children of this World are in their generation *wiser than the Children of Light*<sup>d</sup>." Nor should it escape notice that this Man pretended not to buy the Field for any fixed sum which might represent *its value*. He went *and sold all that he had*,—and the field became his.

The parable of 'The Pearl' follows.

45 Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

It is possible that a contrast may be intended between him who *found* in the last parable,—and him who *seeks*, in this. If so, we are here reminded that while some persons are brought suddenly and unexpectedly to the knowledge of the things which concern their peace,—there are others, (like the Merchantman,) who find, at last, the thing of which they had been a long time in search; the *only* thing which can satisfy their needs, and appease their cravings.

<sup>d</sup> St. Luke xvi. 8.

This Merchantman was seeking for *many* pearls: at it was only because he little expected to meet with *one* which would make all future search for ore, unnecessary. They were "*goodly* pearls" sought; and this it was which made him so eager to secure "the pearl of great price" when last he found it. He saw its beauty, and he knew its worth, in a moment.

who when he had found one Pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

"When he hath *found*;"—for, once more, "he at seeketh, findeth<sup>e</sup>."

"*One* pearl;" for God, and Truth, and the with<sup>f</sup>, and the Church are *one* <sup>g</sup>: undivided and divisible.

A "*pearl*;"—for the pearl was, by the ancients, counted the most costly of all jewels. There is, however, this further difference between the present resemblance and that which precedes: that whereas, before, attention was invited simply to the *hue* of the prize,—here, the *outward splendour* of CHRIST's Kingdom, "the *Beauty* of Holiness," is set forth as well. The pearl is for *ornament*.

"*Of great price*;" for "the merchandize of it better than the merchandize of silver, and the in thereof than fine gold<sup>h</sup>."

In the present parable, as in the former one,

St. Matthew vii. 8. <sup>f</sup> Ephes. iv. 5. <sup>g</sup> Song of Solomon vi. 9.

<sup>h</sup> Proverbs iii. 14; and see the following verses.



he that would win this greatest of Treasures is represented as *selling all that he hath*,—in order that he may obtain it. See the last note on ver. 44. Whereas, however, before, the result of his sacrifice was the possession of *a field* wherein was hid a Treasure,—here, he wins a single small object, which yet contains, collected within itself, the value dispersed before, not only throughout the Field, but throughout the several pieces of the Treasure also. “And as one who is possessed of a pearl,” says an ancient Father, “himself indeed knows of his wealth, but is not known to others,—oftentimes concealing it in his hand, by reason of its small bulk,—so is it in respect of the Gospel. They who possess it, know that they are rich: the unbelievers, know nothing of their treasure.”

Lastly,—what is to “*buy*” the pearl here spoken of? It is, to make a huge sacrifice for it. It is, to give in exchange for it, anything which the owner may choose to demand, or be disposed to accept. With men, this is *money*. But what is God’s requirement? “My son,—*Give Me thy heart*!”

Next comes the Parable of ‘the Draw-net;’ which, in one respect, closely resembles the Parable of the Tares. But the two are broadly distinguished. The one is a prophecy of the present: the other, of the future. The one dwells upon the mixed aspect of the Church *as it is* in

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs xxiii. 26.

the World: the other describes the final issue, —dwells only on *what will be* in the end of the World.

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like 47  
unto a Net, that was cast into the sea, and  
gathered of every kind :

How lively an appeal was this concluding parable! How must this resemblance of the Kingdom to fishes and a net have kindled the imagination of the simple Fishermen who heard! How must their very life and calling have seemed to themselves, (as indeed it was,) all a parable!

CHRIST Himself was the Great Fisherman,—who cast the net of the Gospel even while He spake. It “gathered of every kind;” for in the visible Church all classes of men are included. And not only all ranks, all classes; but also, good *and bad* persons alike are contained within the Church’s net. See ver. 48: and compare St. Matt. xxii. 10. The same lesson which was conveyed by the parable of the Tares, is therefore conveyed by this concluding parable. See above, a long note on ver. 26; and another, on the first part of ver. 38.

The ‘net’ here spoken of is one of that very large kind with which Fishermen capture at once a mighty shoal,—sweeping sometimes the waters of an entire bay.

which, when it was full, they drew to 48

shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

“When it was *full*,”—for it is not till God hath ‘accomplished the number of His elect,’ that the end cometh.—“The *shore*,” for it is not till they have ‘passed the waves of this troublesome world’ that men ‘come to the land of Everlasting Life.’ And “now, the net holds good and bad mingled together; but the Shore shall discover what the net of the Church has brought to land.”—The Angels “*sit down*,”—for the work here ascribed to them, will be done with exceeding vigilance and care. Moreover,—*sitting* denotes *Authority*: (Consider Dan. vii. 9: Joel iii. 12: Mal. iii. 3): and *Rest*: (Consider Micah iv. 4: Zech. i. 11: Psalm xcix. 1: St. Mark xvi. 19: Ephes. ii. 6: Rev. iii. 21: iv. 4, &c.)—They “gather the good *into vessels*,”—for, in God’s “House, there are many mansions<sup>k</sup>.”

It is added that “the bad” shall be “cast away.” This might seem a slender penalty; but their fate is more fully disclosed in ver. 50.—And doubtless it is implied that this casting away shall take place *first*; as was expressly declared in ver. 30: for observe what is said in the next verse.

- 49 So shall it be at the end of the World:  
the Angels shall come forth, and sever the  
wicked from among the just,

<sup>k</sup> St. John xiv. 2. Compare the mention of “bundles,” above, in ver. 30.

This corresponds exactly with what was said in the parable of 'the Tares.' Compare it with ver. 41 : and see the note on ver. 42.

"So shall it be *at the end of the World* :"—our LORD Himself guides us to the point of this parable, which is a prophecy of what will be *hereafter*.

and shall cast them into the furnace 50  
of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing  
of teeth.

This is a repetition, word for word, of ver. 42,—where reference is made to the note on St. Matthew viii. 12. But, as an ancient Bishop well remarks,—"*to fear* becomes us rather than *to expound*." And he adds,—"*The torments of sinners are pronounced in plain terms, that none might plead his ignorance ; which would have been possible, had eternal punishment been threatened in obscure sayings.*"

JESUS saith unto them, Have ye under- 51  
stood all these things? They say unto  
Him, Yea, LORD. Then said He unto them, 52  
Therefore every Scribe *which is* instructed  
unto the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a  
man *that is* an householder, which bringeth  
forth out of his treasure *things* new and old.

This seems to mean,—Ye say that ye have understood all these sayings of Mine, by which ye have been instructed concerning my future earthly

Kingdom ; its Obstacles,—Defilements,—Growth, —Increase,—Might,—Dignity,—Splendour,—and End. Be ye therefore, henceforth, like to the Householder ; who brings forth, now, from his old stores,—now, from his new. Ye are Scribes, taught not only the learning of the Ancient Law ; but the mysteries of the Gospel likewise : bring forth therefore, henceforth, as occasion may require, now, an old truth,—now, a new one,—for the edification of ‘ the Household of Faith <sup>1</sup>.’ . . . . But the saying remains obscure and difficult.

53 And it came to pass, *that* when JESUS  
had finished these Parables, He departed  
54 thence. And when He was come into His  
own country, he taught them in their syna-  
gogue, insomuch that they were astonished,  
and said, Whence hath this *Man* this wis-  
dom, and *these* mighty works ?

“ His own Country ” means the city of Nazareth. Concerning the surprise excited by our LORD’s Discourse, see the last note on St. Matthew vii. The ‘ mighty works ’ are again alluded to in ver. 58. Compare St. Mark vi. 2.

Take notice, that this was a *second* visit to Nazareth,—distinct from *that* recorded in St. Luke iv. 16 to 30.

55 Is not this the Carpenter’s son ? is not

<sup>1</sup> Galatians vi. 10.

His Mother called Mary ? and his Brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas ?

“No wonder that they were mistaken in His *Brethren*,” says an ancient writer, “if they were mistaken in His *Father*.” Joseph was probably now dead ; and the ‘brethren’ here mentioned were most likely the cousins of our LORD, after the flesh : sons of another Mary, who was Wife of Cleophas, and Sister of the Blessed Virgin. Nothing is more certain than that our LORD JESUS CHRIST was the First-born, and *only* Son of His Virgin Mother.

The ‘James’ here mentioned, was the first Bishop of Jerusalem<sup>m</sup>, and the author of the Epistle ; but probably not an Apostle. Simon succeeded him. Their Brother ‘Judas’ is “Jude . . . the brother of James :” author of the Epistle, and one of the Twelve. See the note on St. Matthew xii. 47.

And His Sisters, are they not all with us ? 56  
Whence then hath this *Man* all these things ?  
And they were offended in Him. But JESUS 57  
said unto them, a Prophet is not without  
honour, save in his own country, and in his  
own house.

How nearly was this the very proverb which the same Divine Speaker had already addressed to his unbelieving countrymen,—and in the very

<sup>m</sup> Acts xv. 13, and xxi. 18.

same place! See St. Luke iv. 24. The humble connexions of our Blessed LORD's Mother, and reputed Father, proved a *stumbling-block* in the way of their Faith: as it is here expressed, it "offended" them.

58 And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

The 'mighty works' which He did, are mentioned by St. Mark vi. 5: who adds,—“And *He marvelled* because of their unbelief!”

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The eight Parables which our LORD is declared to have delivered on the present occasion, all relate to the Kingdom of CHRIST,—that is, to His Church. The first parable, (that of 'the Sower'), foretels the obstacles which it would meet with;—and which continue, to this day, to oppose its growth and progress. The next,—the Parable of 'the Tares,' is a prophecy of the appearance which the Visible Church would present to the eyes of men;—a melancholy prophecy, attested and confirmed by every day's experience. These two parables are fully explained by our LORD. The gradation between them is obvious. One, describes how it would fare with the first planting of the Kingdom: the other, how it would fare with that Kingdom in its growth and increase.

So far, then, it had been shewn that only a

fourth part of the seed might be expected to prosper; while *that* fourth part would spring up mixed with tares: a dreary picture truly, for those labourers whom the LORD of the Harvest was about to send forth into His Harvest<sup>n</sup>! Another side of the truth is therefore next displayed for their encouragement. Our SAVIOUR proceeds to deliver three briefer Parables; the first of which,—(peculiar to St. Mark's Gospel<sup>o</sup>),—describes the secret and gradual growth of the Church; the next, its mighty increase; the third, its transforming power. Its victory over all the powers of evil is thus set forth, together with its final triumph.

It is sufficiently remarkable that the growth of seeds should supply the materials for four, out of these five parables.

Three parables yet remain to be noticed. The first two set forth the great preciousness of CHRIST's Kingdom: but while one, (the parable of 'the hid Treasure,') chiefly reminds us that in the World, the Church is *hidden*,—the other, (*that* of 'the Pearl'), sets forth chiefly, its singular Beauty and surpassing Worth.

The Obstacles, and the mixed aspect of the Church having been thus prophetically shadowed forth: its secret growth,—its mighty increase,—and its transforming power: its hidden character, and its outward Beauty:—last comes a prophecy of its wide embrace; and a sketch of what will

<sup>n</sup> St. Matthew ix. 38.

<sup>o</sup> St. Mark iv. 26 to 29.



“be at the end of the World.” The parable of ‘the Drag-net,’ (which is the eighth and last,) discloses the concluding scene of the Church’s History : the severance of ‘the wicked from among the just,’ at the Last Day.

## The Prayer.

**O** LORD JESU CHRIST, who at Thy first coming didst send Thy Messenger to prepare Thy way before Thee ; Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at Thy second coming to judge the World we may be found an acceptable people in Thy sight, who livest and reignest with the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT, ever one God, World without end. Amen.



